

THE *John Lord 1803*

WORKS

Of the MOST REVEREND

Dr. *JOHN TILLOTSON*,

L A T E

Lord Archbishop of CANTERBURY:

C O N T A I N I N G

Two Hundred and Fifty Four

S E R M O N S

A N D

D I S C O U R S E S

O N

S E V E R A L O C C A S I O N S .

T O G E T H E R W I T H T H E

R U L E o f F A I T H .

To which is Added,

An Alphabetical TABLE *of the Principal Matters.*

T H E S I X T H E D I T I O N .

V O L . V .

D U B L I N :

Printed by S. POWELL,

For EDWARD EXSHAW, at the *Bible* on *Cork-bill*, over-against the
Old Exchange, M D C C X X X I X .

THE NEW YORK

WORKS

OF THE MOST REVEREND

DR. JOHN V. TILLOTSON

LAST

Lord Archbishop of Canterbury:

CONTAINING

The History and the Poem

SERMONS



DISCOURSES

SEVERAL OCCASIONS

TOGETHER WITH THE

RULE of FAITH

AND A

THE HISTORY OF THE

THE HISTORY OF THE

VOLUME

THE HISTORY OF THE

THE HISTORY OF THE

THE HISTORY OF THE

THE
CONTENTS.

SERMON XXXII.

The Sin and Danger of adding to the Doctrine
of the Gospel.

GALAT. i. 8, 9.

BUT though we, or an Angel from Heaven
preach any other Gospel unto you, than that
which we have preached unto you, let him be
accursed. As we said before, so say I now
again, if any man preach any other Gospel un-
to you, than that ye have received, let him be
accursed.

Page 1

SERMON XXXIII, XXXIV, XXXV.

Honesty the best Preservative against dangerous
Mistakes in Religion.

John vii. 17. *If any man will do his will, he
shall know of the Doctrine, whether it be of
God, or whether I speak of myself.* 17, 30, 45

The CONTENTS.

SERMON XXXVI.

The Nature of Covetousness.

Luke xii. 15. *And he said unto them, Take heed and beware of Covetousness; for a Man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.* p. 57

SERMON XXXVII, XXXVIII, XXXIX.

The Evil and Unreasonableness of Covetousness.

Luke xii. 15. *And he said unto them, take heed and beware of Covetousness; for a Man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.* 71, 84, 98.

SERMON XL, XLI.

Religion, our first and great Concernment.

Matth. vi. 33. *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.* 112, 127

SERMON XLII.

The Wisdom of Religion.

Psal. cxix. 96. *I have seen an end of all perfection; but thy commandment is exceeding broad.* 142

SER-

The CONTENTS.

SERMON XLIII, XLIV.

The Nature and Influence of the Promises of the Gospel.

2 Pet. i. 4. *Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious Promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature.*

159, 172

SERMON XLV, XLVI.

The Support of good Men under their Sufferings for Religion.

1 Pet. iv. 19. *Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their Souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.*

182, 206

SERMON XLVII.

Of the Work assign'd to every Man, and the Season for doing it.

John ix. 4. *I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day, the night cometh when no man can work.*

222

SER,

The CONTENTS.

SERMON XLVIII.

Of the great Duties of natural Religion, with the Ways and Means of knowing them.

Micah vi. 6, 7, 8. *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with Calves of a year old?*

Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? 238

SERMON XLIX.

Instituted Religion not intended to undermine Natural.

Matth. ix. 13. *But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice.* 260

SERMON L, LI.

Christianity doth not destroy, but perfect the Law of Moses.

Math. v. 17. *Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.* 281, 296

SER-

The CONTENTS.

SERMON LII, LIII, LIV, LV, LVI.

Of the Nature of Regeneration, and its Necessity, in order to Justification and Salvation.

Galat. vi. 15. *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but a new creature.* 309, 322, 335, 347, 359

SERMON LVII, LVIII.

The Danger of all known Sin, both from the Light of Nature and Revelation.

Rom. i. 18, 19. *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.* 372, 392

SERMON LIX.

Knowledge and Practice necessary in Religion.

John xiii. 17. *If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.* 412

SER-

The CONTENTS.

SERMON LX.

Practice in Religion necessary, in proportion to
our Knowledge.

Luke xii. 47, 48. *And that servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes: But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.*

428

SERMON LXI, LXII.

The Sins of Men not chargeable upon God;
but upon themselves.

James i. 13, 14. *Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.*

444, 464



SERMON XXXII.

The Sin and Danger of adding to the
Doctrine of the Gospel.

GALAT. i. 8, 9.

But though we, or an Angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any Man preach any other Gospel unto you, than That ye have received, let him be accursed.

BEFORE I come to handle the words, for SERM. the better understanding of them, I shall XXXII give a brief account of the occasion of them, which was this. Some false Apostles had made a great disturbance in the churches planted by the Apostles of Christ, by teaching that it was necessary for Christians, not only to embrace and entertain the doctrines and precepts of the christian religion, but likewise to be circumcised, and keep the law of *Moses*. Of this disturbance which was raised in the christian church, you have the history at large, *Acts* 15. and as in several other churches,

SERM. so particularly in that of *Galatia*, these false Apostles
 XXXII and seducers had perverted many, as appears by this
 epistle; in the beginning whereof *St. Paul* complains, that those who were seduced into this error of the necessity of circumcision, and keeping the law of *Moses*, had by this new article of faith, which they had added to the christian religion, quite altered the frame of it, and made the Gospel another thing from that which our Saviour delivered, and commanded his Apostles to teach all nations.

For he tells us, ver. 6. of this chapter, that *he marvelled, that they were so soon removed from him that called them by (or through) the grace of Christ, unto another Gospel, that is so different from that which they had been instructed in by those who first preached the Gospel unto them: for the making of any thing necessary to salvation, which our Saviour in his Gospel had not made so, he calls another Gospel. I marvel, that ye are so soon removed from him that called you by the grace of Christ, unto another Gospel, which is not another, οὐκ ἑστίν ἄλλο, which is no other thing, or by which I mean nothing else, but that there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the Gospel of Christ; as if he had said, when I say that ye are removed to another Gospel, I do not mean, that ye have renounced christianity, and are gone over to another religion, but that ye are seduced by those who have a mind to pervert the Gospel of Christ, by adding something to it, as a necessary and essential part of it, which Christ hath not made so: This the Apostle calls a perverting or overthrowing of the Gospel; because, by thus altering the terms and conditions of it, they made it quite another thing from what our Saviour delivered it.*

And then at the 8th and 9th verses he denounceth a terrible *anathema* against those, whoever they shall be, yea, though it were an Apostle, or an Angel from heaven, who by thus *perverting the Gospel of Christ* (that is by making any thing necessary to be believed

believed or practiced, which our Saviour in his Gos-^{SERM.}
pel hath not made so) should in effect *preach another* XXXII
Gospel; but though we, or an Angel from heaven,
preach any other Gospel unto you, than that which we
have preached unto you, let him be anathema, an ac-
curSED thing, and then to express his confidence and
vehemency in this matter, and to shew that he did
not speak this rashly, and in a heat, but upon due
consideration, he repeats it again in the next verse,
As we said before, so say I now again, if any man
preach any other Gospel unto you, than that ye have re-
ceived, let him be accursed.

From the words thus explained by the considerati-
tion of the context, and of the main scope and de-
sign of this epistle, these following *observations* do
naturally arise.

First, That the addition of any thing to the chri-
stian religion, as necessary to be believed and prac-
tised in order to salvation, is a *perverting of the Gos-*
pel of Christ, and preaching another Gospel.

Secondly, That no pretence of infallibility is sufficient
to authorise and warrant the addition of any thing to
the christian doctrine, as necessary to be believed
and practised in order to salvation.

Thirdly, That Christians may judge and discern
when such additions are made.

Fourthly, And consequently, that since the de-
claration of the Gospel, and the confirmation of it,
there is no authority in the christian church to im-
pose upon Christians any thing as of necessity to salva-
tion, which the Gospel hath not made so.

Fifthly, That there is no visible judge (how infal-
lible soever he may pretend to be) to whose definiti-
ons and declarations in matters of faith and practice,
necessary to salvation, we are bound to submit,
without examination whether these things be agreea-
ble to the Gospel of Christ, or not.

Sixthly, and Lastly, Whosoever teacheth any thing
as of necessity to salvation, to be believed or practi-

SERM. fed, besides what the Gospel of Christ hath made necessary, doth fall under the *anathema* here in the text, *because in so doing, he perverteth the Gospel of Christ, and preacheth another Gospel.* Now the Apostle expressly declares, *that though we (that is, he himself, or any of the Apostles) or an Angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you, than what we have preached unto you, let him be accursed: as we said before so say I now again, if any man preach any other Gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed.*

I. That the addition of any thing to the christian religion, as necessary to be believed or practised, in order to salvation, is *a perverting of the Gospel of Christ and preaching another Gospel.*

This is evident from the instances here given in this epistle; for the Apostle chargeth the false Apostles with *perverting the Gospel of Christ, and preaching another Gospel*, upon no other account, but because they added to the christian religion, and made circumcision, and the keeping of the law of *Moses*, an essential part of the christian religion, and imposed upon Christians the practice of these things, and the belief of the necessity of them, as a condition of eternal salvation.

That this was the doctrine of those false teachers, we find expressly, *Acts 15. 1. And certain men which came down from Judea, taught the brethren, and said, except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved; and ver. 24. in the letter written by the Apostles and elders at Jerusalem, to the churches abroad, there is this account given of it; forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us, have troubled you with words, subverting your souls saying ye must be circumcised, and keep the law, to whom we gave no such commandment.* Where you see that this doctrine is declared to be of pernicious consequence, tending to subvert the souls of men, and likewise

wife to be an addition to the doctrine of the Gospel **SERM.**
which was delivered by the Apostles, who here with **XXXII**
one consent declare, that *they had given no such com-*
mandment; that is, had delivered no such doctrine
as this, nor put any such yoke upon the necks of
christians; but on the contrary had declared, that
the death of Christ having put an end to the *Jewish*
dispensation, there was now no obligation upon
Christians to observe the law of *Moses*.

And from the Reason of the thing it is very plain,
that the addition of any thing to the christian reli-
gion, as necessary to be believed or practised in or-
der to salvation, which the Gospel hath not made
so, is *preaching another Gospel*; because it makes an
essential change in the terms and conditions of the
Gospel-covenant, which declares salvation unto men
upon such and such terms, and no other. Now to
add any other terms to these, as of equal necessity
with them, is to alter the condition of the covenant
of the Gospel, and the terms of the christian reli-
gion, and consequently *to preach another Gospel*, by
declaring other terms of salvation, than Christ in his
Gospel hath declared, which is *to pervert the Gospel*
of Christ.

II. No pretence of infallibility is sufficient to au-
thorize and warrant the addition of any thing to the
christian doctrine, as necessary to be believed or
practised, in order to salvation. After the delivery
of the Gospel by the Son of God, and the publicati-
on of it to the World by his Apostles, who were
commissioned and inspired by him to that purpose,
and the confirmation of all, by the greatest and most
unquestionable miracles that ever were, no person
whatever that brought any other doctrine, and de-
clared salvation to men on any other terms than those
which are declared in the Gospel, was to be credit-
ed, what pretence soever he should make to a divine
commission or an infallible assistance. The Apostle
makes a supposition as high as can be, *though we*

SERM. (says he) *or an Angel from heaven preach any other Gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be an anathema.* If the Apostles themselves, who were divinely commissioned, and infallibly assisted in the preaching of the Gospel, should afterwards make any addition to it, or declare any other terms of salvation, than those which are declared in the Gospel which they had already published to the world, they ought not to be regarded.

And the reason is plain ; because what claim soever any person may make to infallibility, and what demonstration soever he may give of it, we cannot possibly believe him, if he contradict himself, and deliver doctrines which so plainly clash with one another : For if he speak true at first I cannot believe him declaring the contrary afterwards : And if he did not speak true at first, I cannot believe him at all ; because he can give no greater proof of his divine commission, and infallible assistance and inspiration, than he did at first.

And the reason is the same, if *an Angel from heaven* should come and preach a contrary doctrine to that of the Gospel, *he* were not to be believed neither ; because he could bring no better credentials of his divine commission and authority, than those who had published the Gospel, and, consequently, he ought not to be credited in any thing contrary to what they had published before. For though a man were never so much disposed to receive a revelation from God, and to submit his faith to it ; yet it is not possible for any man to believe God against God himself ; that is, to believe two revelations, plainly contradictory to one another, to be from God ; and the reason of this is very obvious, because every man doth first, and more firmly, believe this proposition or principle, *that contradictions cannot be true*, than any revelation whatsoever ; for if contradictions may be true, then no revelation from God can signify any

any thing, because the contrary may be equally true, and so truth and falshood be all one. SERM.
XXXII

The Apostle indeed only makes a *supposition*, when he says, *though we or an Angel from heaven, preach any other doctrine unto you*; but by this *supposition* he plainly bars any man, or company of men, from adding to the christian religion any article of faith, or point of practice, as of necessity to salvation, which the Gospel hath not made so; I say, any man, or company of men, whatever authority or infallibility they may lay claim to, because they cannot pretend to a clearer commission and greater evidence of infallible assistance, than *an Apostle* or *an Angel from heaven*, and yet the Text tells us, *that* would not be a sufficient warrant to preach another Gospel; it might indeed bring in question that which they had preached before, but could not give credit and authority to any thing plainly contrary to it, and inconsistent with it.

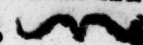
III. Christians may judge and discern when *another Gospel is preached*, when new articles of faith, or points of practice, not enjoined in the Gospel, are imposed upon Christians. This the Apostle supposeth every particular church, and for ought I know, every particular Christian, that is duly instructed in the christian religion, to be a competent judge of, and to be sufficiently able to discern *when another Gospel is preached*, and new terms and conditions, not declared in the Gospel, are added to the christian religion; for if they be not able to judge of this, the Apostle does in vain caution them against the seduction of those *who perverted the doctrine of Christ, and endeavoured to remove them from him that had called them by the grace of Christ, unto another Gospel*.

It may perhaps be said, that there was no need that they should be able to discern and judge of the doctrines of those false teachers, it was sufficient for them to believe the Apostle concerning the doctrines

SERM. of those seducers, when he declared to them the
 XXXII falshood and pernicious consequence of them. But
 the Apostle speaks to them upon another supposition,
 which does necessarily imply, that they were able
 to discern and judge what doctrines were agreeable
 to the Gospel, and what not; for he puts the case,
 that if he himself, or any of the Apostles, or an
 Angel from heaven, should preach to them another
 doctrine, contrary to that of the Gospel, they ought
 to reject it with detestation; but this doth necessarily
 suppose them able to judge, when such doctrines
 were preached, and consequently that all things ne-
 cessarily to be believed and practised by all Christi-
 ans, are clearly and plainly declared in the Gospel;
 all the doctrines whereof are now contained in the
 holy scriptures, in which all things necessary to faith
 and a good life, are so plainly delivered, that any
 sober and inquisitive person may learn them from
 thence; and the meanest capacity, by the help and
 direction of their guides and teachers, may be in-
 structed in them.

And this is not only the principle of protestants,
 but the express and constant doctrine of the ancient
 fathers of the church, whatever the church of *Rome*,
 for the maintaining of her usurped authority over
 the consciences of men, pretends to the contrary.
 And if this were not so, that men are able to discern
 and judge which are the doctrines of the Gospel, and
 what is contrary to them; the doctrine of the Gos-
 pel was in vain preached, and the holy scriptures
 containing that doctrine were written to no purpose.

Some things in scripture are granted to be obscure
 and difficult, on purpose to exercise the study and
 enquiries of those who have leisure and capacity for
 it: But all things necessary are sufficiently plain;
 otherwise it would be impossible to judge when *ano-
 ther Gospel is preached*, which the Apostle here sup-
 poseth the *Galatians* capable of doing. For if the
 revelation of the Gospel be not sufficiently plain in
 all

in all things necessary to be believed and practised, SERM.
 then Christians have no rule whereby to judge what XXXII
 doctrines are agreeable to the Gospel, and what not, 
 for an obscure rule is of no use; that is, in truth, is
 no rule to those to whom it is obscure.

I proceed to the IVth *observation*, which is plainly consequent from those laid down before; namely, that since the declaration of the Gospel, and the confirmation given to it, there is no authority in the christian church to impose upon Christians any thing, as of necessity to salvation, which the Gospel hath not made so.

The commission given by our Lord and Saviour to his Apostles, was *to preach the Gospel to all nations* (or as St. *Matthew* expresses it) *to go and teach all nations, to observe all things whatsoever he had commanded them*; and this is that which we call the *Gospel*, viz. that doctrine which Christ commanded his Apostles to preach and publish to the world; and if the Apostles themselves had exceeded their commission, and added any other points of faith or practice to those which our Saviour gave them in charge to teach and publish to the world, they had, in so doing, been guilty of that which St. *Paul* here in the text chargeth the false Apostles with, viz. of *preaching another Gospel*. And if the Apostles had no authority to add any thing to the Gospel, much less can any others pretend to it, since they have neither so immediate a commission, nor such a miraculous power to give testimony to them, that *they are teachers come from God*.

Now this doctrine of the Gospel, which the Apostles preached to the world, is that which Christians are so often, and so earnestly by the Apostles in all their epistles *exhorted to continue in, and not to suffer themselves to be shaken in mind, by every wind of new doctrine*; because that which the Apostles had delivered to them, was the entire doctrine of the Gospel, which was never to receive any addition or alteration.

ERM. alteration. This is that which St. *Peter* calls ‘ the
 XXXII ‘ holy commandment which was delivered unto
 ~~~~~ ‘ them, 2 *Pet.* 2. 21. It had been better for them  
 ‘ not to have known the way of righteousness, than  
 ‘ after they have known it, to turn from the holy  
 ‘ commandment delivered unto them,’ speaking in  
 all probability of those who were seduced by the er-  
 rors of the *Gnosticks*, from the purity of the christi-  
 an doctrine delivered to them by the Apostles. This  
 likewise St. *Paul* calls *the common faith*, Titus 1. 4.  
 and St. *Jude* ver. 3. *the common salvation*; that is,  
 the doctrine which contains the common terms of  
 salvation, and *the faith which was once delivered to the*  
*saints*, that is, by the Apostles of our Lord, who  
 published the Gospel; *once delivered*, that is, once  
 for all, so as never afterwards to admit of any  
 change or alteration. This faith he *exhorts* Christi-  
 ans *earnestly to contend for*, against those several sects  
 of seducers, which were crept into the christian  
 church, and did endeavour by several arts to *pervert*  
*the Gospel of Christ*, and to deprave *the faith deliver-*  
*ed* by the Apostles.

So that the doctrine of the Gospel published by  
 the Apostles, is fixed and unalterable, and there can  
 be no authority in the church to make any change  
 in it, either by taking from it, or adding any thing  
 to it, as necessary to be believed or practised in or-  
 der to salvation.

5. It follows likewise from the foregoing observa-  
 tions, that there is no *visible judge* (how much soever  
 he may pretend to *infallibility*) to whose determina-  
 tion and decision in matters of faith and practice ne-  
 cessary to salvation, Christians are bound to submit,  
 without examination whether those things be agree-  
 able to the doctrine of the Gospel, or not.

When our saviour appeared in the world, though  
 he had authority enough to exact belief from men,  
 yet because there was a standing revelation of God  
 made to the *Jews*, he appeals to that revelation, as  
 well



well as to his own miracles, for the truth of what he said, and offered himself, and his doctrine, to be tried by the agreeableness of it to the scriptures of the Old Testament, and the predictions therein concerning him. And this was but reasonable, it being impossible for any man to receive two revelations, as from God, without liberty to examine whether they be agreeable to, and consistent with one another. In like manner the Apostles of our Lord and Saviour, though they were guided and assisted by an infallible spirit, and had an immediate commission from Christ to preach the doctrine of the Gospel, did not require from men absolute submission to their doctrines and dictates, without examination of what they delivered, whether it were agreeable to the divine revelation which was contained in the ancient scriptures.

This was St. Paul's constant custom and way of teaching among the *Jews*, who had received the revelation of the Old Testament; he did not dictate to them by virtue of his infallibility, but *reasoned with them out of the scriptures*, and required their belief no further than what he said should, upon examination, appear agreeable to the scriptures. So we find *Acts* 17. 2, 3. 'And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them (speaking of the *Jews*) and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alledging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead, and that this Jesus whom I preach unto you is the Christ. And chap. 18. 28. he mightily convinced the *Jews*, and that publicly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.' And St. Paul was so far from reproving them for examining his doctrine by the scriptures, that he commended it, as an argument of a noble and generous mind in the *Bereans*, that they did not give full assent to his doctrine, till upon due search and examination they were satisfied that what he had said was agree-



SERM. agreeable to the scriptures, *chap. 17. 11, 12.* Where  
 XXXII speaking of the *Bereans*, it is said, *That these were*  
 more noble than those in *Theſſalonica*, in that they re-  
 ceived the word, with all readineſs of mind, and ſearch-  
 ed the ſcriptures daily, whether thoſe things were ſo;  
 therefore many of them believed; that is, becauſe up-  
 on ſearch they found what he delivered to be agree-  
 able to the ſcriptures; and it was not a ſlight, but  
 diligent and deliberate ſearch, they took time to ex-  
 amine things thoroughly; for it is ſaid *they ſearched*  
*the ſcriptures daily.* And here in the text *St. Paul*  
 puts the caſe, that if he, or any other of the Apoſtles,  
 concerning whoſe divine commiſſion and aſſiſtance  
 they were ſo fully ſatiſfied, ſhould deliver any thing  
 to them contrary to the Goſpel which they had for-  
 merly preached, they were to reject it with the  
 greateſt abhorrence and deteſtation; and this neceſ-  
 ſarily ſuppoſeth a liberty to examine what was deli-  
 vered, even by thoſe whom they believed to be in-  
 fallibly aſſiſted, and a capacity to diſcern and judge  
 whether what they ſaid was agreeable to the Goſpel  
 at firſt delivered to them or not.

And after this, ſhall any perſon or Church (what  
 claim ſoever they may make to infallibility) aſſume  
 to themſelves an authority to dictate in matters  
 of faith, and that their dictates ought to be received  
 with an abſolute ſubmiſſion, and without liberty to  
 examine whether they be agreeable to *the faith once*  
*delivered to the ſaints*; and though they add new ar-  
 ticles to the chriſtian Faith, and of which there is  
 not the leaſt foot-ſtep or intimation in any of the  
 ancient creeds of the chriſtian church, and do plainly  
 impoſe upon Chriſtians the practice and belief of ſe-  
 veral things as neceſſary to ſalvation, which the Goſ-  
 pel never declared to be ſo, yet no body ſhall judge  
 of this, but every man ought without more ado, to  
 believe blindfold, and to reſign up his underſtand-  
 ing and judgment to the directions of this *viſible in-*  
*fallible judge?*

But

But surely this is not the reasonable obedience of **SERM.**  
*faith*, but the forced submission of slaves to the ty- **XXXII**  
ranny of their masters. Christians are expressly forbid  
*to call any man father or master upon earth*, because *we*  
*have one father and master in heaven*. Now to make  
an absolute submission of our understandings to any  
upon earth, so as without examination to receive  
their dictates in matters of faith, is surely, if any  
thing can be so, *to call such a person father or master*,  
because a greater submission than this we cannot pay  
*to our father who is in heaven*, even to God himself.  
I come now to the

VI and last *observation* from the text, that whoso-  
ever teacheth any thing as of necessity to salvation,  
to be believed or practised, besides what the Gospel  
of Christ hath made necessary, does fall under the  
*anathema* here in the text; because they that do so,  
do, according to the mind of St. Paul, *pervert the*  
*Gospel of Christ, and preach another Gospel*. For the  
reason why he chargeth the false Apostles with  
*preaching another Gospel*, and those that were seduced  
by them, as *being removed from him that called them*  
*into the grace of Christ, unto another Gospel*, is plain-  
ly this; that they had changed the terms of the  
christian religion, by adding new articles to it, which  
were not contained in the Gospel; that is, by ma-  
king it necessary to believe it to be so, because *they*  
taught so. Now St. Paul expressly declares this to  
be *preaching another Gospel*, because they plainly al-  
tered the terms of salvation declared in the Gospel,  
and made that to be necessary to the salvation of  
men, which the Gospel had not made so.

And whatever person or church does the same,  
does incur the same guilt, and falls under the *ana-*  
*thema* and censure here in the text; yea, *though he*  
*were an Apostle, or an Angel*: And I am sure no  
bishop or church in the world can pretend either to  
an equal authority or infallibility with an *Apostle, or*  
*an Angel from heaven*.

Let



SERM. Let us then hear what St. Paul declares in this XXXII case, and consider seriously, with what earnestness and vehemency he declares it ; *Though we (says he) or an Angel from heaven preach any other Gospel unto you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other Gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed.* St. Paul you see is very earnest in this matter, and very peremptory, and therefore I cannot but think this declaration of his to be more considerable, and every way more worthy of our regard and dread, than all the *anathema's* of the council of Trent, which in direct affront and contempt of this *anathema* of St. Paul, hath presumed to add so many articles to the christian religion, upon the counterfeit warrant of tradition, for which there is no ground or warrant from the scripture, or from any antient creed of the christian church.

And for the truth of this, I appeal to the creed of pope Pius the IVth, compiled out of the definitions of the council of Trent ; by which council the pope only is authorised to interpret the true sense and meaning of the canons and decrees of that council ; and consequently his interpretations must be of equal force and authority with that of the council itself. So that whatsoever he hath put into his new creed for an article of faith, ought to be received with the same pious affection and veneration, as if the creed had been compiled by the council itself ; because the pope, it seems, and no body else, understands the true meaning of that council, at least is thought fit to declare it. And therefore one may justly wonder at the presumption of those, who after this declaration of the council, have taken upon them to *expound the catholick faith*, and to *represent* that religion to us, as it is defined in that council ; because if there be any controversy about the meaning of its definitions (as there have been a great many even betwixt those who



who were present at the council when those defini-  
 tions were made) none but the *pope* himself can cer-  
 tainly tell the meaning of them.

SERM.  
 XXXII  


Now in this creed of pope *Pius*, there are added to the ancient creed of the christian church, twelve or thirteen new articles; as concerning *purgatory*, *transubstantiation*, *the worship of images*, *the invocation of saints*, *the communion in one kind*, and that *the church of Rome is the mother and mistress of all churches*, and that *there is no salvation to be had out of it*; and several other points, all which have either no foundation in scripture, or are plainly contrary to it, and none of them ever esteemed as *articles of faith* in the ancient christian church for the first five hundred years; and yet they are now obtruded upon Christians, as of equal necessity to salvation, with *the twelve articles of the Apostles Creed*, and this under a pretence of infallibility, which St. *Paul* tells us would not have justified *an Apostle*, or *an Angel from heaven*, in making such additions to the christian religion, and the imposing any thing as necessary to salvation, which is not so declared by the Gospel of *Christ*.

And all that they have to say for this, is, that *we* do not pretend to be infallible: but there is a necessity of an infallible judge to decide these controversies, and to him they are to be referred. Which is just as if in a plain matter of right, a contentious and confident man should desire a reference, and contrive the matter so as to have it referred to himself, upon a sleeveless pretence, without any proof or evidence, that he is the only person in the world that hath authority and infallible skill to decide all such differences. Thus the *church of Rome* would deal with us in things which are as plain as the noon-day; as whether God hath forbidden the worship of images in the second commandment? whether our Saviour did institute the sacrament in both kinds? whether the people ought not to read the scriptures,  
 and

SERM. and to have the publick service of God in a known  
 XXXII tongue? these, and the like, they would have us re-  
 ~~~~~ fer to an infallible judge, and when we ask who he  
 is, they tell us that their church, which hath im-
 posed these things upon Christians, and made these
 additions to the Gospel of Christ, is that infallible
 judge. But if she were as infallible as she pretends
 to be, even as *an Apostle, or an Angel from heaven*,
St. Paul hath denounced an *anathema* against her,
 for *preaching another Gospel*, and making those things
 necessary to the salvation of men, which are not con-
 tained in the *Gospel of Christ*.

The *inference* from all this discourse in short, is
 this; that *we should contend earnestly for the faith once*
delivered to the saints, and not suffer ourselves, by
 the confident pretences of seducers, *to be removed*
from him that hath called us through the grace of Christ,
unto another Gospel. The necessary doctrines of the
 christian religion, and the common terms of salva-
 tion are so plain, that if any man be ignorant of
 them, it is his own fault; and if any go about to
 impose upon us any thing as of necessity to be be-
 lieved and practised in order to salvation, which is
 not declared to be so in the holy scriptures, which
 contain the true doctrine of the Gospel, what autho-
 rity soever they pretend for it, yea, though they as-
 sume to themselves to be infallible; the Apostle hath
 plainly told us what we are to think of them; for
 he hath put the case as high as is possible here in the
 text, when he says, *Though we, or an Angel from*
heaven preach any other Gospel unto you, than that
which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

I will conclude all with that counsel which the
 spirit of God gives to the churches of *Asia*, Rev. 3.
 3. *Remember therefore how thou hast received and*
heard, and hold fast; and chap. 2. 10. *Fear none of*
those things which thou shalt suffer, be thou faithful un-
to the death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

SERMON XXXIII.

Honesty the best Preservative against dangerous Mistakes in Religion.

× JOHN vii. 17.

If any man do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

SINCE there are so many different opinions SERM. and apprehensions in the world about matters XXXIII of religion, and every sect and party does with so much confidence pretend, that *they*, and *they* only, are in the truth; the great difficulty and question is, by what means men may be secured from dangerous errors and mistakes in religion. For this end some have thought it necessary that there should be *an infallible church*, in the communion whereof every man may be secured from the dangers of a wrong belief. But it seems God hath not thought this necessary: If he had, he would have revealed this very thing more plainly than any particular point of faith whatsoever. He would have told us expressly, and in the plainest terms, that he had appointed *an infallible guide and judge in matters of faith*, and would likewise have told us as plainly who he was, and where we might find him, and have recourse to him upon all occasions; because the sincerity of our faith depending upon him, we could not be safe from mistake in particular points, without so plain and clear a revelation of this *infallible judge*, that there could be no mistake about him; nor could there be an end of any other

SERM. controversies in religion, unless this *infallible judge*
 XXXIII (both that there is one, and who he is) were out
 of controversy. But neither of these are so: It is
 not plain from scripture that there is *an infallible judge and guide in matters of faith*; much less is it
 plain who he is; and therefore we may certainly conclude, that God hath not thought it necessary that there should be *an infallible guide and judge in matters of faith*, because he hath revealed no such thing to us: and *that bishop*, and *that church* who only have arrogated *infallibility* to themselves, have given the greatest evidence in the world to the contrary; and have been detected and stand convinced of the greatest errors: and it is in vain for any man, or company of men, to pretend to *infallibility*, so long as the evidence that *they are deceived* is much greater and clearer than any proof they can produce for their *infallibility*.

If then God hath not provided *an infallible guide and judge in matters of faith*; there is some other way whereby men may be secured against dangerous and damnable errors in religion, and whereby they may discern truth from imposture, and what doctrines are from God, and what not; and this our Saviour declares to us here in the text, namely, that an honest and sincere mind, and a hearty desire to do the will of God, is the best preservative against fatal errors and mistakes in matters of religion;
 ἵνα τις θέλη ποιεῖν If any man desire to do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

There are *two* dangerous mistakes in religion: To reject any thing which really comes from God; and to receive and entertain any thing as from God, which doth not really come from him.

First, To reject any thing which really comes from God. This mistake the *Jews* frequently fell into, when they rejected the true prophets which God from time to time sent to them, slighting their message, and

and persecuting their persons : but they miscarried SERM.
most fatally and remarkably in their contempt of XXXIII
the true *Messias*, that great prophet whom they had
so long expected, and whom God sent at last, to
bring salvation to them ; but when he came, they
knew him not, nor would receive him, but used him
with all the despight and contempt imaginable, not
as a teacher come from God, but as a deceiver, and
impostor.

Now the danger of rejecting any thing that comes
from God, consists in this, that it cannot be done
without the highest affront to the divine Majesty.
To reject a divine message or revelation, is to oppose
God, and fight against him. So our Saviour tells the
Jews, that in despising him, they despised him that sent
him.

Secondly, There is also another dangerous mistake
on the other hand, in entertaining any thing as a re-
velation from God, which is not really from him.
And this likewise the *Jews* were frequently guilty
of, in receiving the false prophets which spake in
the name of the Lord, when he had not sent them.
And this is commonly the temper of those who re-
ject the truth, greedily to swallow error and delusion.
So our Saviour tells us of the *Jews*, John 5. 43.
I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not ;
if another shall come in his own name, him ye will re-
ceive. This prediction of our Saviour's concerning
the *Jews*, was fully accomplished ; for after they
had rejected him, who gave such abundant evidence
that he was the true *Messias*, and a teacher sent from
God, they received others, who really came in their
own names, and ran after those who pretended to be
the *Messias*, and were in great numbers destroyed
with them. And this is very just with God, that
those who receive not the truth in the love of it, should
be given up to strong delusions, to believe lies.

Now these being the two great dangerous mistakes
in religion which men are liable to, my work at

SERM. this time shall be to shew, how a sincere desire and
 XXXIII endeavour *to do the will of God*, is a security to men
 against both those dangers; and it will appear to be
 so, upon these *two* accounts.

I. Because he who sincerely desires and endeavours to do the will of God, is hereby better qualified and disposed to make a right judgment of spiritual and divine things.

II. Because God's providence is more especially concerned to secure such persons from dangerous errors and mistakes in things which concern their eternal salvation. These shall be the *two* heads of my following discourse.

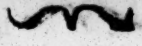
First, Because he who sincerely desires and endeavours to do the will of God, is hereby better qualified and disposed to make a right judgment of spiritual and divine things, and that for these two reasons:

1. Because such a person has a truer notion of God, and divine things.

2. Because he is more impartial in his search and enquiry after truth.

1. Because such a person hath a truer notion of God and divine things. No man is so likely to have clear and true apprehensions of God, as a good man, because he hath transcribed the divine perfections in his own mind, and is himself in some measure and degree what God is. And for this reason it is, that the scripture so often lays the foundation of all divine knowledge in the practice of religion. *Job 28. 28. The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil, is understanding; and Psal.*

III. 10. *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*, that is, the principle and foundation of it; *a good understanding have all they that do his commandments*: whereas the vices and lusts of men darken their reason, and distort their understandings, and fill the mind with gross and sensual apprehensions of things, and thereby render men unfit to discern those truths

truths which are of a spiritual nature and tendency, SERM. 3
and altogether indisposed to receive them. For though XXXIII
the vices of men be properly seated in their wills, 
and do not possess their understandings; yet they
have a bad influence upon them, as fumes and va-
pours from the stomach are wont to affect the head.

Nothing indeed is more natural to the mind and
understanding of men, than the knowledge of God;
but we may abuse our faculties, and render them un-
fit for the discerning even of their proper objects.

When men by wicked practices, have rendered
themselves unlike to God, they will not love to re-
tain the knowledge of him in their minds, but will be-
come vain in their imaginations concerning him. What
clouds and mists are to the bodily eye, that the lusts
and corruptions of men are to the understanding;
they hinder it from a clear perception of heavenly
things; *the pure in heart*, they are best qualified for
the sight of God.

Now according as a man's notions of God are,
such will be his apprehensions of religion. All reli-
gion is either *natural*, or *revealed*: *natural religion*
consists in the belief of a God, and in right concep-
tions and apprehensions concerning him, and in a
due reverence and observance of him, and in a ready
and chearful obedience to those laws which he hath
imprinted upon our nature; and the sum of our obe-
dience consists in our conformity to God, and an en-
deavour to be like him. For supposing God to have
made no external revelation of his mind to us, we
have no other way to know his will, but by consider-
ing his nature, and our own; and if so, then he
that resembles God most, is like to understand him
best, because he finds those perfections in some mea-
sure in himself, which he contemplates in the divine
nature; and nothing gives a man so sure a notion
of things, as practice and experience. Every good
man is in some degree *partaker of a divine nature*,
and feels that in himself, which he conceives to be

SERM. in God: So that this man does experience what
 XXXIII others do but talk of; he sees the image of God
 in himself, and is able to discourse of him from an
 inward sense and feeling of his excellency and per-
 fections.

And as for *revealed religion*, the only design of that is, to revive and improve the *natural* notions which we have of God, and all our reasonings about divine revelation are necessarily gathered by our natural notions of religion: And therefore he that sincerely endeavours *to do the will of God*, is not apt to be imposed upon by the vain and confident pretences of divine revelation; but if any doctrine be proposed to him, which pretends to come from God, he measures it by those steady and sure notions which he hath of the divine nature and perfections, and by those he will easily discern whether it be worthy of God, or not, and likely to proceed from him: He will consider the nature and tendency of it, and whether it be (as the Apostle expresses it) *a doctrine according to godliness*, such as is agreeable to the divine nature and perfections, and tends to make us like to God: If it be not, though *an Angel from heaven* should bring it, he will not receive it: If it be, he will not reject it upon every idle pretence, and frivolous exception that prejudiced and ill-minded men may make against it; but after he is satisfied of the reasonableness and purity of the doctrine, he will accept of such evidence and confirmation of it, as is fit for God to give to his own revelations; and if the person that brings it, hath an attestation of *miracles* (which is necessary in case it be a new doctrine) and if he carry on no earthly interest and design by it, but does by his life and actions make it evident that he aims at the glory of God, and the good of men; in this case a good man, whose mind is free from passion and prejudice, will easily assent, that this man's *doctrine is of God, and that he does not speak of himself.*

himself. This was the evidence which our Saviour SERM.
 offered to the *Jews* in vindication of himself, and XXXIII
 his doctrine, *John 7. 18. he that speaketh of himself,*
seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that
sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in
him; as if he had said, hereby may you distinguish
 one that really comes from God, from an impostor:
 If any man *seek his own glory*, you may conclude
 that *God hath not sent him*, but whatever he pretends
 that *he speaks of himself*, but he who by his life, and
 the course of his actions demonstrates that *he seeks*
the honour of God, and not any interest and advan-
 tage of *his own the same is true, and there is no un-*
righteousness in him; that is, no falshood or design
 to deceive (for so the word *ἀδικία* does sometimes sig-
 nify; (you may conclude such an one to be no de-
 ceiver, or impostor. And if any man sincerely de-
 sires and endeavours *to do the will of God*, he may,
 by such marks and characters as these, judge of any
doctrine that pretends to be *from God*, whether it
 so or not. This is the *first* reason; because he that
 sincerely desires and endeavours *to do the will of God*,
 hath the truest notion of God, and of divine
 things.

2. Such a person is more impartial in his search
 and enquiry after truth, and therefore more likely
 to find it, and to discern it from error. He that
 hath an honest mind, and sincerely endeavours *to*
do the will of God, is not apt to be swayed and by-
 assed by any interest or lust: For his great interest
 is to please God, and he makes all his other interests
 and concernments to stoop and yield to that. But
 if a man be governed by any earthly interest or de-
 sign, he will measure all things by that, and is not
 at liberty to entertain any thing that crosses it, and
 to judge equally of any doctrine that is opposite to
 his interest. This our Saviour gives for a reason,
 why the great *Rabbies* and teachers among the *Jews*
 did not believe and embrace his doctrine, *John 5.*

SERM. 44. *How can ye believe, which receive honour one of
XXXIII another?* If men have any other design in religion
than to please God, and to advance his honour and
glory in the world, no wonder if they be apt to re-
ject the most divine truths because these are calcu-
lated, not to approve us to men, but to God.

And as vain-glory, and desire of the applause of
men; so likewise doth every other lust make a man
partial in his judgment of things, and clap a false
byass upon his understanding, which carries it off
from truth, and makes it to lean towards that side
of the question which is most favourable to the inte-
rest of his lusts. A vicious man is not willing to en-
tertain those truths which would cross and check him
in his course: He hath made the truth his enemy,
and therefore he thinks himself concerned to oppose
it, and rise up against it: the light of it offends
him, and therefore he shuts his eyes that he may not
see it. Those holy and pure doctrines, which are
from God, reprove the lusts of men, and discover
the deformity of them; and therefore no wonder
if bad men be so hard to be reconciled to them.
This account our Saviour likewise gives of the fierce
enmity of the *Jews* to him, and his doctrine, *John*
3. 19, 20. Light is come into the world, and men
loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds
were evil; for every one that hath done evil, hateth
the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds
should be reprov'd.

The vicious inclinations of men are a dead weight
upon their understandings, and able to draw down
the scales against the clearest truths: For though it
be absolutely in no man's power to believe, or to dis-
believe what he will; yet mens lives have many
times a great influence upon their understandings,
to make assent easy, or difficult; and as we are for-
ward to believe what we have a mind to, so are we
very backward and slow in yielding our assent to any
thing that crosseth our inclinations. Men that allow
themselves

themselves in ungodliness and worldly lusts, will not easily believe those doctrines which charge men so strictly with all manner of holiness, and purity. SERM. XXXIII

This is the way which the devil hath always used to blind the eyes of men, that the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ might not shine into them. And certainly the most effectual way to keep men in infidelity, is to debauch them in their lives; therefore the Apostle gives this as the reason of the infidelity of men in the last times, *2 Thess. 2. 12. They believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.* When men once abandon themselves to lewd and vicious practices, infidelity becomes their interest, because they have no other way to defend and excuse a wicked life, but by denying the truth which opposeth it, and finds fault with it.

That man only stands fair for the entertainment of truth, who is under the dominion of no vice, or lust; because he hath nothing to corrupt or bribe him, to seduce him, or draw him aside in his enquiry after truth; he hath no interest but to find the truth, and follow it: he is enquiring after the way to heaven, and eternal happiness, and he hath the indifferency of a traveller which is not inclined to go this way rather than another; for his concernment is to find out the right way, and to walk in it: Such an indifferency of mind hath every good man who sincerely desires to do the will of God; he stands ready to receive truth, when sufficient evidence is offered to convince him of it; because he hath no manner of concernment that the contrary proposition should be true. As in *mathematicks*, a man is ready to give his assent to any proposition, that is sufficiently demonstrated to him, because he hath no inclination or affection to one side of the question more than to the other; all his design and concernment is to find out the truth on which side soever it lies; and he is like to find it, because he is so indifferent, and impartial. But if a man be bias'd by any

SERM. any lust, and addicted to any vicious practice, he is
 XXXIII then an interested person, and concerned to be partial in his judgment of things, and is under a great temptation to infidelity when the truths of God are proposed to him; because whatever the evidence for them be, he cannot but be unwilling to own the truth of that doctrine, which is so contrary to his inclination and interest. If the affections and interests of men were as deeply concerned, and as sensibly touched in the truth of *mathematical* propositions, as they are in the principles of *morality* and *religion*, we should find that when a proposition stood in their way, and lay cross to their interest, though it were never so clearly demonstrated, yet they would raise a dust about it, and make a thousand cavils, and fence even against the evidence of a *demonstration*; they would palliate their error, with all the skill and art they could, and though the absurdity of it was never so great and palpable, yet they would hold it fast against all sense and reason, and face down mankind in the obstinate defence of it; for we have no reason to doubt, but that they who in matters of *religion* will believe directly contrary to what they see, would, if they had the same interests and passions to sway them in the case, believe contrary to the clearest *mathematical demonstration*; for where there is an obstinate resolution not to be convinced, all the reason and evidence in the world signifies nothing.

Whereas he that is biased by no passion or interest, but hath an honest mind, and is sincerely desirous to *do the will of God*, so far as he knows it, is likely to judge very impartially concerning any doctrines that are proposed to him: For if there be not good evidence that they are *from God*, he hath no reason to deceive himself, in giving credit to them; and if there be good evidence that they are *divine*, he hath no interest or inclination to reject them;
 for

For it being his great design to *do the will of God*, SERM. he is glad of all opportunities to come to the know-XXXIII ledge of it, that he may do it.

Thus you see, how a sincere desire and endeavour to obey the will of God does secure men against fatal errors and mistakes in matters of religion; because such persons are hereby better disposed to make a right judgment of divine things, both because they have truer and surer notions of God and religion, and are more impartial in their search and enquiry after truth. This is the first account.

II. Another reason why they who sincerely desire to *do the will of God*, have a great security in discerning truth from error, is, because the providence of God is more especially concerned to preserve such persons from dangerous errors and mistakes, in things which concern their eternal salvation. When men are of a teachable temper, God loves to reveal himself and his truth to them; and such is an humble and obedient frame of mind, *Psal. 25. 9. The meek will be guide in judgment; the meek will be teach his way.* The proper disposition of a scholar, is to be willing to learn; and that which in religion we are to learn is, *what is the good and acceptable will of God*, that we may *do it*, for practice is the end of knowledge. *If you know these things* (says our blessed Lord) *happy are ye if ye do them.* It is necessary to *know the will of God*; but we are *happy* only in *the doing of it*: and if any man be desirous to *do the will of God*, his goodness is such, that he will take effectual care to secure such an one against dangerous and fatal errors. He that hath an honest mind, and *would do the will of God*, if he knew it, God will not suffer him to remain ignorant of it, or to be mistaken about it, in any necessary points of faith and practice.

St. Paul is a wonderful instance of the goodness of God in this kind. He was undoubtedly a man of a very honest mind; he had entertained the *Jewish* religion, as revealed by God, and been bred in it; and

SERM. and out of a blind reverence and belief of his teach-
 XXXII ers, who rejected Christ and his doctrine, he like-
 wise opposed and persecuted them with a mighty
 zeal, and an honest intention, being *verily persuaded* (as
 he himself tells us) *that he ought to do what he did,*
against the name of Jesus of Nazareth; he was under
 a great prejudice upon account of his education,
 and according to the heat of his natural temper,
 transported with great passion: But *because he did*
what he did, ignorantly, and in unbelief; God was
 pleased *to shew mercy to him*, and in a miraculous
 manner, to convince him of the truth of that religion
 which he persecuted. He was sincerely *desirous to do*
the will of God, and therefore God would rather
 work a miracle for his conversion, than suffer him to
 go on in so fatal a mistake concerning the christian
 religion.

And as the providence of God doth concern itself
 to secure good men from dangerous errors and mis-
 takes in matters of religion; so by a just judgment
 he gives up those who allow themselves in vicious
 practices, to error and infidelity. And this is the
 meaning of that passage of the prophet, *Isa. 6. 10.*
so often cited by our Saviour, and applied to the
Jews, of making the heart of that people fat, and
their ears heavy, and closing their eyes, lest they should
understand and be converted. So again, *Isa. 66. 3, 4.*
 God threatens the people of *Israel*, That because they
 were wicked and abominable in their lives, he would
 abandon them, and give them over to a spirit of
 delusion; *they have chosen their own ways, and their soul*
delighteth in their abominations; I also will chuse their
delusions. God is said to chuse those things for us, which
 he permits us to fall into: So *Rom. 1. 28.* God is said
 to give over the abominable heathen to a *reprobate*
mind. As they did not like to retain God in their know-
 ledge, God gave them over *εἰς ἀδόκιμον νοῦν*, to an *injudicious*
and undiscerning mind. When men abandon them-
 selves to wickedness and impiety, God withdraws
 his

his grace from them; and by his secret and just SERM. XXXIII
 judgment they are deprived of the faculty of discerning between truth and error, between good and evil. 2 *Thess.* 2. 10, 11, 12. it is said, that *the man of sin shall come with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved: And that for this cause, God would send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lye; that they might all be damned, who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.* And it is just with God, that men of vicious inclinations and practices should be exposed to the cheat of the grossest and vilest impostors. God's providence is concerned for men of honest minds, and sincere intentions: But if men *take pleasure in unrighteousness*, God takes no further care of them, but *delivers them up to their own hearts lusts, to be seduced into all those errors, into which their own vain imaginations and their foolish hearts are apt to lead them.*

Thus I have endeavoured, as briefly as I could, to shew that an honest mind, that *sincerely desires and endeavours to do the will of God*, is the best security against fatal errors and mistakes in matters of religion; both because it disposeth a man to make a true judgment of divine things, and because the providence of God is more especially concerned for the security of such persons.

There remains an objection to be answered, to which discourse may seem liable; but *this together with the inferences which may be made from this discourse*, I shall refer to another opportunity.

The second
Sermon on
this Text.

SERMON XXXIV.

Honesty the best Preservative against
dangerous Mistakes in Religion.

JOHN vii. 17.

If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

SERM.
XXXIV

I Made entrance into these words the last day ; in which our Saviour declares to us, that an honest and sincere mind, and an hearty desire and endeavour to do the will of God, is the best security and preservative against dangerous errors and mistakes in matters of religion ; *ἐάν τις θέλη ποιῆν, if any man desire to do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.*

Now there are (I told you) *two* great mistakes in religion : *To reject any thing which really is from God ; and to receive and entertain any thing as from God, which is not really from him.* And therefore I proposed from this *text* to shew how a sincere desire and endeavour to do the will of God, is a security to men against both these dangers, namely, upon these *two* accounts.

First, Because he who sincerely desires and endeavours to do the will of God, is hereby better qualified and disposed to make a right judgment of spiritual and divine things ; and that for these two reasons.

I. Because such a person hath a truer notion of God, and divine things. He that resembleth God most,

most, is like to understand him best, because he SERM.
finds those perfections, in some measure, in him-XXXIV
self, which he contemplates in the divine nature ;
and nothing gives a man so sure a notion of things,
as practice and experience.

II. Because such a person is more impartial in his search and enquiry after truth, and therefore more likely to find it, and to discern it from error. That man only stands fair for the entertainment of truth, who is under the power and dominion of no vice or lust, because he hath nothing to corrupt or bribe him, to seduce him and draw him aside in his enquiry after truth : He hath no manner of concernment that the contrary proposition should be true, having the indifferency of a traveller, and no other interest, but to find out the right way to heaven, and to walk in it. But if a man be byassed by any lust, and addicted to any vicious practice, he is then an interested person, and concerned to make a partial judgment of things, and is under a great temptation to infidelity, when the truths of God are proposed to him ; because, whatever the evidence for them be, he cannot but be unwilling to own the truth of those doctrines, which are so contrary to his inclination and interest.

Secondly, Another reason why they who sincerely desire to do the will of God, have a greater security in discerning truth from error, is, because the providence of God, is more especially concerned to preserve such persons from dangerous errors and mistakes, in things which concern their eternal salvation. When men are of a teachable temper, of an humble and obedient frame of mind, God loves to reveal himself, and his truth to them, *Psal. 25. 9. The meek will be guide in judgment, and the meek will be teach his way.* The proper disposition of a scholar, is to be willing to learn ; and that which in religion we are to learn, is, *what is the good and acceptable will of God, that we may do it ;* for practice is the
end

SERM. end of knowledge ; *if ye know these things* (saith our XXXIV Saviour) *happy are ye if ye do them.* It is necessary *to know the will of God* ; but we are only *happy in the doing of it* ; and *if any man be desirous to do the will of God*, his goodness is such, that he will take effectual care to secure such a one against dangerous and fatal errors. He that hath an honest mind, and would do the will of God, if he knew it, God will not suffer him to remain ignorant of it, or to be mistaken about it, in any necessary point of faith or practice. Thus far I have gone.

I shall now proceed to remove an *objection*, to which this discourse may seem liable, and then draw some *inferences* from the whole.

After all that hath been said, some perhaps may ask, is every good man then secure from all error and mistake in matters of religion ? This is a mighty privilege indeed : But do not we find the contrary in experience ? that an honest heart, and a weak head, do often meet together ?

For answer to this, I shall lay down these following *propositions*.

First, That if there were any necessity, that a good man should be secured from all manner of error and mistake in religion, this probity of mind, and sincere desire to do the will of God, is the best way to do it ; because such a temper and disposition of mind gives a man the best advantages to discern betwixt truth and error ; and God is most likely to reveal his will to such persons. But there is no necessity of this, because a man may be a good man, and go to heaven, notwithstanding a great many mistakes in religion about things not necessary. For while we are in this imperfect state, *we know but in part*, and see many things very imperfectly : But when we shall come into a more perfect state, *that which is imperfect shall be done away* ; the light of glory shall scatter all those mists and clouds, which are now upon our understandings, and hinder us from a clear sight

sight and judgment of things; we shall then see SERM.
God, and other things, as they are; and be freed XXXIV
from all that ignorance, and those many childish
mistakes, which we are liable to here below; and
till then, it is not necessary that we should be secured
from them. Humility, under a sense of our ignorance,
is better for us, than infallibility would be.

Secondly, This temper and disposition of mind
which I have been speaking of, is a certain security
against fatal mistakes in religion, and a final continuance
in such errors as would prove damnable; and this is all
that this discourse pretends to, or our Saviour hath
promised in this *text*. And considering the goodness of
God, nothing is more improbable, than that an honest
mind that seeks impartially after truth, should miss of
it, in things that are fundamentally necessary to
salvation. And if we could suppose such a man to fall
into such an error, either it would not be fundamental
to *him*, having not been, perhaps, proposed to him
with sufficient evidence, and would be forgiven him
upon a general repentance for all Sins and errors
known, or unknown; or he would not be permitted to
continue in it; but the providence of God would find
out some way or other to convince him of his error,
and to bring him to the acknowledgment of the truth,
that he might be saved. God would rather speak to
him immediately from heaven (as he did to St. Paul)
than suffer him to continue in such an error as would
infallibly carry him to hell.

Thirdly, There is no such depth of judgment, and
subtlety of wit required to discern between gross and
damnable errors in religion, and necessary and saving
truth, but that an ordinary capacity may be able to
do it. There is so plain a line drawn between great
truth, and gross errors, that it is visible to every
capacity; and an ordinary understanding, that is not
under a violent prejudice, or blinded by some vice or
fault of the will, may easily discern it.

SERM. XXXIV. Indeed, in matters of lesser moment or concernment, and which have no such considerable and immediate influence upon the practice of an holy life, the difference betwixt truth and error is not always so gross and sensible, as to be obvious to every unprejudiced eye. But we have all the reason in the world to believe, that the goodness and justice of God is such, as to make nothing necessary to be believ'd by any man, which, by the help of due instruction, may not be made sufficiently plain to a common understanding. God hath so tender a care of good men, who sincerely love him and his truth, that we may reasonably presume, that he will not leave them under an unavoidable mistake concerning those matters upon which their eternal salvation does depend. *The judge of all the world will do right*; and then we may certainly conclude, that he will not condemn any man for no fault, and make him for ever miserable, for falling into an error, which with all his care and diligence, he could not possibly either discern or avoid.

Fourthly, God hath made abundant provision for our security from fatal and dangerous errors in religion, by these *three* ways.

I. By an *infallible rule*, sufficiently plain in all things necessary.

II. By sufficient means of instruction, to help us to understand this rule.

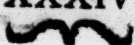
III. By an *infallible promise* of security from dangerous errors and mistakes, if with an honest mind and due diligence we apply ourselves to understand this rule and make use of the means of instruction, which God hath provided for that purpose.

I. God hath given us an *infallible rule*, sufficiently plain in all things necessary. He hath given us the holy scriptures, which were given at first by divine inspiration, *i. e.* by men infallibly assisted in the writing of them, and therefore must needs be an *infallible rule*; and all scripture divinely inspired, is profitable

ble for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction **SERM.**
in righteousness, as St. Paul tells us, 2 Tim. 3. 16. **XXXIV**
speaking there of the books of the Old Testament;
and there is the same reason as to the inspired writings of the New.

Now if the scriptures be an *infallible rule*, and *profitable for doctrine and instruction in righteousness*, i. e. to teach us to believe, and do; it follows of necessity, that they are sufficiently plain in all things necessary to faith and a good life; otherwise they could not be *useful for doctrine and instruction in righteousness*; for a rule that is not plain to us in these things, in which it is necessary for us to be directed by it, is of no use to us; that is in truth, it is no rule. For a rule must have these two properties; it must be *perfect*, and it must be *plain*. The scriptures are a perfect rule, because the writers of them being divinely inspired, were infallible: And they must likewise be plain; otherwise, though they be never so perfect, they can be of no more use to direct our faith and practice, than a sun-dial in a dark room is, to tell us the hour of the day: For though it be never so exactly made, unless the sun shine clearly upon it, we had as good be without it. A rule that is not plain to us, whatever it may be in *itself*, is of no use at all to us, till it be made plain, and we understand it.

II. God hath likewise provided sufficient means of instruction to help us to understand this rule. It is not necessary that a rule should be so plain, that we should perfectly understand it at first sight; it is sufficient, if it be so plain that those of better capacity and understanding may, with due diligence and application of mind, come to the true knowledge of it; and those of a lower and more ordinary capacity, by the help and instruction of a teacher. *Euclid's Elements* is a book sufficiently plain to teach a man *Geometry*: but yet not so plain that any man at first reading should understand it perfectly; but

SERM. that by diligent reading, by a due application, and
 XXXIV *steddy* attention of mind, a man of extraordinary fa-
 gacity and understanding may come to understand
 the *principles* and *demonstrations* of it, and those of a
 more ordinary capacity, with the help of a teacher,
 may come to the knowledge of it. So when
 we say that the scriptures are plain in all things ne-
 cessary to faith and a good life, we do not mean
 that every man at first hearing or reading of these
 things in it, shall perfectly understand them; but
 by diligent reading and consideration, if he be of
 good apprehension and capacity, he may come to a
 sufficient knowledge of them; and if he be of a
 meaner capacity, and be willing to learn, he may,
 by the help of a teacher, be brought to understand
 them without any great pains; and such teachers
 God hath appointed in his church for this very pur-
 pose, and a succession of them to continue to the
 end of the world.

In a word, when we say the scriptures are plain
 to all capacities, in all things necessary, we mean,
 that any man of ordinary capacity, by his own dili-
 gence and care, in conjunction with the helps and
 advantages which God hath appointed, and in the
 due use of them, may attain to the knowledge of
 every thing necessary to his salvation; and that there
 is no book in the world more plain, and better fitted
 to teach a man any *art* or *science*, than the *Bible* is
 to direct and instruct men in *the way to heaven*;
 and it is every man's fault if he be ignorant of any
 thing necessary for him to believe, or do, in or-
 der to his eternal happiness.

III. Good Men are likewise secured from fatal er-
 rors in religion, by the *infallible* promise of God, if
 so be that with honest minds and due diligence they
 apply themselves to the understanding of this rule,
 and make use of the means of instruction which God
 hath provided for that purpose. God hath promi-
 sed to *guide and teach the humble and meek*; that is,
 such

such as are of a submissive and teachable temper, desirous and diligent to be instructed in the truth. SERM. XXXIV
Prov. 2. 3, 4, 5. If thou incline thine ear to wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.
 And here in the text our Saviour assures us, that if any man be desirous to do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether he spake of himself; i. e. he shall be able to discern the doctrines which are from God.

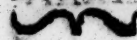
This is the Provision which God hath made for our security from fatal mistakes in religion; and this is in all respects a better security, and more likely to guide and conduct us safely to heaven, than any infallible church; and that for these reasons.

First, Because it is much more certain that God hath made this provision which I have mentioned, than that there is an infallible church appointed and assisted by him to this purpose. That the scriptures are an infallible and adequate rule, and sufficiently plain in all things necessary, I have already proved; and I add further, that this was the constant judgment of the ancient church, and so declared by the unanimous consent of the fathers of it for many ages; and that all councils in their determination of faith, proceeded upon this rule, till the second council of Nice.

I have likewise proved, that God hath provided a succession of pastors and teachers in his church, to instruct us in this rule; and that we have God's infallible promise for our security from dangerous errors and mistakes, if with an honest mind and due diligence we apply ourselves to understand this rule, and make use of the means of instruction which God hath provided for that purpose.

SERM.

XXXIV



But that there is *an infallible church* appointed and assisted by God, to declare and determine matters of faith, and to be an infallible interpreter of scripture, is not certain, because there is no clear and express text of scripture to that purpose, that any church whatsoever, much less that the *church of Rome* hath this power and privilege.

Nay, I add further, that it is impossible, according to the principles of the *church of Rome*, that this should be proved from scripture; because, according to their principles, we cannot know either which are the true books of scripture, or what is the true sense of scripture, but from the authority and infallible declaration of that church. And if so, then the infallibility of the church must be first known, and proved, before we can either know the scriptures or the sense of them; and yet till we know the scriptures, and the sense of them, nothing can be proved by them. Now to pretend to prove the infallibility of their church by scripture, and at the same time to declare, that which are the true books of scripture, and what is the true sense of them, can only be proved by the infallible authority of their church, is a plain and shameful *circle*, out of which there is no way of escape; and consequently that God hath appointed *an infallible church* is impossible, according to their principles, ever to be proved from scripture, and the thing is capable of no other proof. For that God will infallibly assist any society of men, is not to be known, but by divine revelation. So that unless they can prove it by some other revelation than that of scripture (which they do not pretend to) the thing is not to be proved at all. Yes, they say, by the *notes* and *marks* of the *true church*; but what those *marks* are, must either be known from scripture, or some other divine revelation, and then the same difficulty returns; besides that one of the most essential *marks of the true church* must be *the profession of the true faith*; and then it

it must be first known which is *the true faith*, before we can know which is *the true church*; and yet they say, that no man can learn *the true faith*, but from *the true church*; and this runs them unavoidably into another *circle* as shameful as the other. So that which way soever they go to prove *an infallible church*, they are shut up in a plain *circle*, and must either prove the *scriptures* by *the church*, and *the church* by *the scriptures*; or *the true church* by *the true faith*, and *the true faith* by *the true church*.

Secondly, This provision and security which I have mentioned, is more human, better accommodated and suited to the nature of man; because it doth not suppose and need a standing and perpetual miracle, as the other way of *an infallible church* doth. All inspiration is supernatural and miraculous, and this infallible assistance which the *church of Rome* claims to herself, must either be such as the Apostles had, which was by immediate inspiration, or something equal to it, and alike supernatural: But God does not work miracles without need, or continue them when there is no occasion for them. When God delivered the *law* to the people of *Israel*, it was accompanied with miracles, and the prophets which he sent to them from time to time, had an immediate inspiration; but their *supreme judicature*, or their *general council*, which they call the *Sanhedrim*, was not infallibly assisted in the expounding of the *law*, when doubts and difficulties arose about it; no, nor in judging of true and false prophets; but they determined this, and all other emergent cases, by the standing revelation and rule of their *written law*; and that they were not infallibly assisted, is evident from the great errors they fell into, in *making void the commandments of God by their traditions*, and in their rejecting and crucifying the true *Messias*, and the *Son of God*.

In like manner the Apostles and first teachers of the christian religion, were immediately inspired,

SERM.
XXXIV

and miraculously assisted in the publishing of the christian doctrine, and for the speedy and more effectual propagating and planting of it in the world, in despite of the violent prejudices that were against it, and the fierce opposition that was made to it. But when this was done, this miraculous and extraordinary assistance ceased, and God left the christian religion to be preserved and continued by more human and ordinary ways, the doctrines of it being committed to *writing for a standing rule of faith and practice* in all ages, and an *order of men* appointed to instruct people in those doctrines, with a promise to secure both teacher and people, that sincerely desire to know, and do the will of God, from all fatal errors and mistakes about things necessary to their eternal salvation; and this is a provision more likely to be made by God, and better suited to the nature of man, than the perpetual and needless miracle of an inspired, or any otherwise *infallible church*.

Thirdly, This way is likewise more agreeable to the nature of religion, and the virtue of faith. The design of an *infallible church* is to secure all that continue in the communion of it, against all possibility of error in matters of faith. The question now is not, whether an *infallible church* would do this? but whether that church which arrogates *infallibility* to itself, does not pretend to do this? And if they could do it, it would not be agreeable to the nature of religion, and the virtue of faith. For faith, which is the principle of all religious actions, would be no virtue, if it were necessary. A true and right belief can be no virtue, where a man is *infallibly* secured against error. There is the same reason of virtuous and criminal actions; and as there can be no crime or fault in doing what a man cannot help; so neither can there be any virtue. All virtuous actions are matter of praise and commendation; and therefore it can be no virtue in any man, because it deserves no commendation; to believe and own that
the

the sun shines at noon-day, when he sees it does so. SERM. 2
No more would it be a virtue in any man, and de-XXXIV
serve praise, to believe aright, who is in a church
wherein he is *infallibly* secured against all errors in
matters of faith. Make any thing necessary, and
impossible to be otherwise, and the doing of it ceases
to be a virtue. God hath so framed religion, that
the evidence of truth, and the means of coming to
the knowledge of it, as to be a sufficient security to
men of honest minds and teachable tempers, against
all fatal and final mistakes concerning things neces-
sary to salvation; but not so, that every man that is
of *such a church*, should be *infallibly* secured against
all errors in matters of faith; and this on purpose
to try the virtue and disposition of men, whether
they will be at the pains to search for truth, and
when it is proposed to them with sufficient evidence,
though not by an *infallible* hand, they will *receive*
it in the love of it, that they may be saved.

Fourthly, This is as much security against errors
in matters of faith, as God hath provided against
sin and vice in matters of practice; and since a right
belief is only in order to a good life, a man would
be hard put to it, to give a wise reason, why God
should take greater care for the *infallible* security of
mens faith, than of their obedience. The reason
pretended why God should make such *infallible* pro-
vision for a right faith, is, for the better security of
mens eternal salvation, and happiness. Now the
virtues of a good life have a more direct and imme-
diate influence upon *that*, than the most orthodox
belief. *The end of the commandment (i. e. of the de-*
claration of the Gospel) is charity. In the christian
religion that which mainly avails to our justification
and salvation is, *a faith that worketh by charity*, and
the keeping of the commandments of God. He that
beareth these sayings of mine, and doth them (saith our
blessed Lord) *I will liken him to a wise man that built*
his house upon a rock; and again, not every one that
saith

SERM. *saith unto me, Lord, Lord, (i. e. makes profession*
 XXXIV *of faith in me) shall enter into the kingdom of heaven;*
but he that doth the will of my father which is in hea-
ven; and again, if ye know these things, happy are ye
if ye do them. And the Apostle St. Peter exhorts
 Christians to *add to their Faith knowledge, and virtue,*
and godliness, and brotherly kindness, and charity, that
so an abundant entrance may be ministred to them, into
the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Je-
sus Christ. So that the virtues of a good life have
 the greatest influence upon our salvation, and the
 main stress of christianity is to be laid there. And
 therefore whatever reason can be assigned, why God
 should provide for the *infallible* security of our faith,
 is much stronger, why an equal provision should be
 made to secure holiness, and obedience of life; be-
 cause without *this*, faith cannot *infallibly* attain its
end, which is *the salvation of our souls.* But this it
 is granted God hath not done, and experience shews
 it; and therefore it is unreasonable to suppose that
 he hath done the other. It is sufficient, that in both
 kinds he hath done that which is sufficient to make
 us capable of happiness, if we be not wanting to
 ourselves; the rest he hath left to the sincerity of our
 endeavours; expecting we on our part, *should work*
out our salvation with fear and trembling, and give all
diligence to make our calling and election sure. And if
 God hath made such provision by the Gospel, for all
 that enjoy the light and advantage of it, that none
 can miscarry without their own fault; then both his
 goodness and wisdom are sufficiently acquitted, with-
 out an *infallible guide and judge* in matters of faith;
 and that irreverent way of arguing in the *canon law*
 might well have been spared; that of necessity there
 must be an *infallible judge* of controversies in religion;
aliter dominus non videretur fuisse discretus, otherwise
God would not seem to have ordered matters discreetly.

But

But what *infallible* security soever they have in the SERM.
church of Rome, as to matters of faith, they are cer- XXXIV
 tainly the worst provided of wholesome and safe di-
 rections for the consciences and lives of men, of any
 church in the world. No religion that I know of in
 the world, ever had such lewd and scandalous casuists.
 Witness the moral divinity of the *Jesuits*, which hath
 been so exposed to the world, not only by those of *our*
 religion, but by their own writers also. Nor is this
 mischief only confined to *that order*; their casuists in
 general, and even the more antient of them, who
 writ before the *order of Jesuits* appeared in the
 world, have given such a liberty, and loose, to
 great immorality in several kinds, as is infinitely to
 the reproach of the best and purest religion in the
 world. Infomuch that Sir *Thomas More* himself,
 who was a great zealot for that religion, could not
 forbear to make a loud complaint of it, and to pass
 this severe censure upon the generality of their casu-
 ists: "That their great business seemed to be, not
 " to keep men from sin, but to teach them *quàm*
 " *propè ad peccatum liceat accedere sine peccato*; how
 " near to sin they might lawfully come without
 " sinning." In the mean time the consciences of men
 are like to be well directed, when instead of giving
 men plain rules for government of their hearts
 and lives, and clear resolutions of the material doubts,
 which frequently occur in human life, they entan-
 gle them in niceties and endless scrupulosities, teach-
 ing them to split hairs in divinity, and how with
 great art and cunning they may avoid the commit-
 ting of any sin, and yet come as near to it as pos-
 sible. This is a thing of a most dangerous conse-
 quence to the souls of men; and if men be but once
 encouraged to pass to the utmost bounds of what is
 lawful, the next step will be into that which is unlaw-
 ful.

So that unless *faith without the works will save*
men, notwithstanding *infallible* security which they
 pretend

SERM. pretend to give men of a sound and right belief (if it
 XXXIV were really as much as they talk of) the salvation of men
 would still be in great hazard and uncertainty, for want of better and safer directions for a good life, than are ordinarily to be met with in the casuistical writings of that church; especially if we consider that the scriptures are lock'd up from the people in an unknown tongue, where the surest and plainest directions for a good life are most plentifully to be had; insomuch, that a man had better want all the volumes of casuistical divinity, that ever were written in the world, than to be without the *Bible*; by the diligent studying of which Book alone, he may sooner learn the way to heaven, than by all the books in the world without it.

Fifthly and lastly, This provision which God hath made, is, when all is done, as good a security against fatal errors and mistakes in religion, as *an infallible church* could give, if there were one; and it is as good a way to prevent and put an end to controversies in religion, so far as it is necessary that they should be prevented, and have an end put to them: And these are the two great reasons why *an infallible judge* is so importunately demanded, and insisted upon. I shall speak to *these* distinctly, and severally; but because they will require a longer discourse than the time will allow, I shall not enter upon them at present, but refer them to another opportunity.

SERMON

SERMON XXXV.

*The Third
Sermon on
this Text.*

Honesty the best Preservative against
dangerous Mistakes in Religion.

JOHN vii. 17.

If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

WHEN I made entrance into these words, SERM.
XXXV
I proposed from this *text*,
First, To shew that an honest and sincere mind, and a hearty desire and endeavour to do the will of God, is the greatest security and best preservative against dangerous errors and mistakes in matters of religion.

In the next place, I proceeded to remove an *objection*, to which my discourse upon this subject might seem liable. Some perhaps might ask, Is every good man then secure from all error and mistake in matters of religion? This is a mighty privilege indeed. But do we not find the contrary in experience, that an honest heart, and a weak head do often meet together? For answer to this, I laid down several *propositions*;

By the *last* of which I shewed, that God hath made abundant provision for our security from fatal and dangerous errors in religion, both by *the infallible rule* of the holy scripture, and by sufficient *means of instruction* to help us to understand this rule, and by
his

SERM. his *infallible promise of assisting us*, if with honest
 XXXV minds, and a due diligence we apply ourselves to
 the understanding of this rule, and the use of
 these means. And *this* I told you, was in all re-
 spects a better security, and more likely to conduct
 us safe to heaven, than any *infallible church* what-
 soever; and that for *five* reasons; *four* of which I
 have already treated of, and now proceed to the
fifth, and last, *viz.*

Because this provision which I have shewn God
 hath made, is both as good a security against fatal
 errors and mistakes in religion, as an *infallible church*
 could give, if there were *one*: And it is likewise as
 good a way to prevent and put an end to controver-
 sies in religion, so far as it is necessary they should
 be prevented, or have an end put to them. And
these are the *two* great reasons why an *infallible judge*
 is so importunately demanded, and insisted upon.
 I shall speak to these *two* points distinctly, and se-
 verally.

First, Because this is as good a security against fa-
 tal errors and mistakes in religion, as an *infallible*
church could give, if there were *one*. For an *infallible*
church, if there were such an one upon earth,
 could not *infallibly* secure particular Christians against
 errors in faith, any other way, than by the defini-
 tion and declaration of those who are *infallible* in
 that church. And there are but *three* that pretend
 to it; either the pope; or a general council; or the
 pope and a general council agreeing in the same de-
 finitions. Not the pope by himself, nor the general
 council without the pope; because the church which
 pretends to *infallibility*, is not agreed, that either of
 these alone is *infallible*, and therefore their definiti-
 ons can be no certain, much less *infallible* foundation
 of faith; no not to that church which pretends to
infallibility. So that if there be an *infallible oracle* in
 that church, it must be the pope and council in con-
 junction, or the definition of a council confirmed by
 the

the pope. Now in that case, either the council was **SERM.**
infallible in its definitions, before they had the pope's **XXXV**
 confirmation, or not. If the council was *infallible*
 in its definitions, before they had the pope's confir-
 mation; then the council alone, and of itself was
infallible (which a great part of the church of *Rome*
 deny) and then it needed not the pope's confirmati-
 on to make it *infallible*: Or else a general council
 is not *infallible* in its definitions, before they receive
 the Pope's confirmation; and then the pope's con-
 firmation cannot make it so: For that which was not
infallibly defined by the council, cannot be made *in-*
fallible by the pope's confirmation.

But there is another difficulty yet: It is a maxim
 generally received, and that even in the *Roman*
church, "That the definitions of a general council,
 " confirmed by the pope, are not obligatory, unless
 " they be received by the universal church." From
 whence these *two* great inconveniencies will un-
 avoidably follow.

I. That no man is obliged to believe such defini-
 tions, till he certainly know that they are received
 by the universal church which how he should certain-
 ly, much less infallibly know, I cannot understand;
 unless he either speak with all the Christians in the
 world, or the representatives of all particular churches
 return back and meet again in council, to declare,
 that the universal church hath received their defini-
 tions; which I think was never yet done.

II. It will follow, that the definitions of a gene-
 ral council confirmed by the Pope, are not *infallible*,
 till they be received by the universal church. For if
 they were *infallible* without that they would be obli-
 gatory without it; because an *infallible* definition,
 if we know it to be so, lays an obligation to believe
 it, whether it be received by the universal church,
 or not. And if such definitions are not *infallible*
 till they be received by the universal church, they
 cannot

SERM. cannot become *infallible* afterwards; because if the XXXV definitions were not *infallible* before, they cannot be received as such by the universal church, nor by the mere reception of them, be made to be *infallible* definitions, if they were not so before.

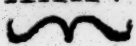
But if we should pass over all these difficulties, there is a greater yet behind, and that is, supposing the definitions of general councils confirmed by the pope to be *infallible*, particular Christians cannot be secured *infallibly* from error without the knowledge of those definitions. And there are but *two* ways imaginable of conveying this knowledge to them: Either by the living voice of their particular pastors, whom they are implicitly to believe in these matters; but particular pastors are *fallible* (as they themselves grant) and therefore their words can neither be an *infallible* foundation of faith, or an *infallible* means of conveying it; and it is unreasonable, *they* say, for men that own themselves to be *infallible*, to require an implicate belief to be given to them: Or else the knowledge of the definitions of councils must be conveyed to particular Christians, by writing, and if so, then there will only be an *infallible rule*, but no living *infallible judge*. And if an *infallible rule* will serve the turn, we have the scriptures which we are sure are *infallible*, and therefore at least as good as any other *rule*. But they say that the definitions of council give us an *infallible* interpretation of scripture, and therefore are of greater advantage to us. But do not the definitions of councils sometimes also need explication, that we may know the certain sense of them, without which we cannot know the doctrines defined? Yes certainly, they need explication as much as scripture, if there be any difference about the meaning of them; and there have been, and still are, great differences among those of their own church about the meaning of them. And if the explications of general councils need themselves to be explained, then there is nothing

nothing got by them, and we are but where we SERM. were before: For differences about the meaning of **XXXV** the definitions of general councils, make as great difficulties and uncertainties in faith, as the differences about the meaning of scripture.

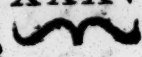
Well, but the people have the living voice of their particular pastors to explain the definitions of councils to them. But this does not help the matter neither, for these *two* reasons.

1. Because particular pastors have no authority to explain the definitions of general councils. The council of *Trent* hath, by express decree, reserved to the Pope, and to him only, the power to explain the definitions of the council; if any difference arise about the meaning of them. So that if there be any difference about the true sense and meaning of any of the definitions of the council, particular pastors have no authority to explain them; and where there is no doubt or difference about the meaning of them, there is no occasion for the explication of them.

2. But suppose they had authority to explain them, this can be no *infallible* security to the people, that they explain them right; both because particular pastors are *fallible*; and likewise because we see in experience, that they differ in their explications; witness the bishop of *Condom's exposition* of the catholic faith, and of the definitions of the council of *Trent*, which is in many material points very different from that of *Bellarmino*, and many other famous doctors of that church. And which is more, witness the many differences betwixt *Ambrosius*, *Catharinus*, and *Dominicus à Soto*, about the definitions of that council, in which they were both present, and heard the debates, and themselves bore a great part in them. Now if they who were both present at the framing of the definitions of that council cannot agree about the meaning of them, much less can it be expected from those that were absent.

SERM. *Secondly*, This provision which I have mentioned, XXXV  is likewise as good a way to prevent and put an end to controversies in religion, so far as it is necessary they should be prevented, or have an end put to them, as any *infallible church* would be, if there were one: And this is another reason why *an infallible church* is so much insisted upon, that there may be some way and means for a final decision of controversies, which the scriptures cannot be, because they are only *a dead rule*, which can end no controversy without a *living judge* ready at hand, to interpret and apply that rule upon emergent occasions.

It is not necessary that all controversies in religion should either be prevented, or decided: This the church which pretends to be *infallible*, cannot pretend to have done; because there are manifold controversies, even in the church of *Rome* herself, concerning matters of religion, which still remain undecided; and in their commentaries upon scripture, many differences about the sense of several texts concerning which she hath not thought fit to give an *infallible* interpretation. And where their popes, and several of their general councils, have thought fit to meddle with scripture, they have applied and interpreted texts more improperly and absurdly, than even their private doctors. And, which is more, in differences about points of faith, which are pretended on both sides to be fundamental, this church hath not thought fit to put an end to them by her infallible decision, after two hundred years brangling about them. For instance, in that fierce and long difference about *the immaculate conception of the blessed Virgin*, which, on both sides, is pretended to be an *article of faith*, and for which, contrary revelations of their canoniz'd saints are so frequently pretended; and yet neither pope, nor general council, have thought fit to exert their *infallibility* for the decision of this controversy. So that if their
church

church had this talent of *infallibility* ever committed SERM.
to them, they have, with *the slothful servant* laid it XXXV
up in a napkin; and according to our Saviour's rule, 
have long since forfeited it, for not making use of
it.

And whereas it is pretended, that the scripture is but a *dead rule*, which can end no controversies without a *living judge* ready at hand, to interpret and apply that rule upon emergent occasions; the same objection lies against *them*, unless a general council which is *their living judge*, were always sitting. For the definitions of their councils in writing are liable to the same, and greater objections, than the written rule of the scriptures.

The sum of all is this. In differences about lesser matters, mutual charity and forbearance will secure the peace of the church, though the differences remain undecided; and in greater matters, an *infallible rule* searched into with an honest mind, and due diligence, and with the help of good instruction, is more likely to extinguish and put an end to such differences, than any *infallible judge*, if there were one; because an humble and honest mind is more likely to yield to reason, than a perverse and cavilling temper is to submit to the sentence of an *infallible judge*, unless it were back'd with an *inquisition*. The church of *Rome* supposeth herself *infallible*, and yet notwithstanding that, she finds that some question and deny her *infallibility*, and then her sentence signifies nothing. And of those who own it, many dispute the sense and meaning of her sentence; and whether they deny the *infallibility* of her sentence, or dispute the sense of it, in neither of these cases will it prove effectual to the deciding of any difference.

But after all this provision which we pretend God hath made for honest and sincere minds, do we not see that men fall into dangerous and damnable errors, who yet cannot, without great uncharitableness, be

SERM. supposed not to be sincerely desirous to know the
XXXV truth, and to do the will of God?

~~~~~ To this I shall briefly return these *two* things.

I. That the same errors are not equally damnable to all. The innocent and (humanly speaking) almost invincible prejudices of education in some persons even against a fundamental truth; the different capacities of men, and the different means of conviction afforded to them; the greater and lesser degrees of obstinacy, and a faulty will in opposing the truths proposed to them; all these, and perhaps several other considerations besides, may make a great difference in the guilt of mens errors, and the danger of them.

II. When all is done, the matter must be left to God, who only knoweth the hearts of all the children of men. We cannot see into the hearts of men, nor know all their circumstances, and how they may have provoked God to forsake them, and give them up to error and delusion, *because they would not receive the truth in the love of it, that they might be saved.* And as on the one hand God will consider all mens circumstances, and the disadvantages they were under for coming to the knowledge of the truth, and make allowance to men for their invincible errors, and forgive them upon a general repentance: So on the other hand, he who sees the insincerity of men, and that the errors of their understandings did proceed from gross faults of their lives, will deal with them accordingly. But if men be honest and sincere, God, who hath said, *if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine,* will certainly be as good as his word.

It now remains only to draw some *inferences* from this discourse, and they shall be these *three*.

*First*, from this *text*, and what hath been discoursed upon it, we may infer how slender and ill-grounded the pretence of the church of *Rome* to *infallibility* is; whether they place it in the pope, or in a  
general

general council, or in both. The last is the most **SERM.**  
 general opinion; and yet it is hard to understand **XXXV**  
 how *infallibility* can result from the pope's confirma-  
 tion of a general council, when neither the council was  
*infallible* in framing its definitions, nor the pope in  
 confirming them. If the council were *infallible* in  
 framing them, then they needed no confirmation: If  
 they were not, then *infallibility* is only in the pope that  
 confirms them, and then it is the pope only that is  
*infallible*. But no man that reads these words of our  
 Saviour, *if any man will do his will, he shall know of*  
*the doctrine*, would ever imagine that the bishop of  
 Rome (whoever he shall happen to be) was secured  
 from all fatal errors in matters of faith, much less  
 that he were endowed with an *infallible* spirit, in  
 judging what doctrines are from God, and what not.  
 For it cannot be denied, but that many of their  
 popes have been notoriously wicked and vicious in  
 in their lives: Nay, *Bellarmino* himself acknow-  
 ledgeth, that for a succession of fifty Popes together,  
 there was not one pious and virtuous man that sat in  
 that chair; and some of their popes have been con-  
 demned and deposed for *heresy*; and yet for all this,  
 the pope, and the governing part of that church,  
 would bear the world in hand that he is *infallible*.  
 But if this saying of our Saviour be true, *that if any*  
*man will do his will, he shall know of his doctrine,*  
*whether it be of God*; then every honest man that  
 sincerely desires to do the will of God, hath a fairer  
 pretence to *infallibility*, and a clearer text for it,  
 than is to be found in the whole Bible, for the *infalli-*  
*bility* of the bishop of Rome. What would the  
 church of Rome give, that there were but as express  
 a text in scripture for the *infallibility* of their popes,  
 as this is for the security of every good man, in his  
 judgment of doctrines; which makes *infallibility*  
 needless? What an insufferable noise, and what  
 endless triumphs would they make upon it, if it had  
 been any where said in the Bible, That if any man



SERM. be bishop of Rome, and sit in St. Peter's chair,  
 XXXV *he shall know of my doctrine whether it be of God?*

Had there been such a *text* as this, we should never have been troubled with their impertinent citation of *texts*, and their remote and blind inferences from *Pasce Oves*, and *super hanc petram; feed my sheep*; and *upon this rock will I build my church*; to prove the pope's *infallibility*. And yet no man of sense or reason ever extended the text I am speaking to, so far as to attempt to prove from it the *infallibility* of every good man; but only his security from fatal errors and mistakes in religion. The largest promises that are made in scripture of security from error and mistake about divine things, are made to good men, who sincerely desire to do the will of God. And if this be so, we must conclude several popes to have been the farthest from *infallibility* of any men in the world. And indeed there is not a more compendious way to persuade men that the christian religion is a *fable*, than to set up a lewd and vicious man for the oracle of it.

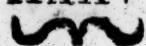
Nay, I will go farther yet; that there are no promises made in scripture, of direction or assistance, or security from mistake, to any church; but the same are made in as full and express terms to every good man that sincerely desires to know the truth, and to practice it. Is it promised to the church, or to the pastors of it, *I will be with you always*? And hath not our Saviour promised the same to every one that is obedient to his word, *John 14. 23. If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him*? And does not the Apostle apply the same promise to every good Christian, *Heb. 13. 5. I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*? For where is the difference between these expressions? *I will be with you*, and *I will make my abode with him*? *I will be with you always*, and *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*? is it promised to the church, that the  
 Spirit

*Spirit shall lead her into all truth?* And is not the same **SERM.**  
 promise made to every good man? *John 14. 21. He XXXV*  
*that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is*  
*that loveth me: and he that loveth me, shall be loved of*  
*my father; and I will love him, and I will manifest*  
*myself to him; that is, God will reveal his will to*  
*those that love him, and keep his commandments.*  
*Hath God promised to build his church upon a rock?*  
*And doth not our Saviour use the same metaphor*  
*concerning every man that doth the will of God?*  
*Matth. 7. 24. Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine,*  
*and doth them, is like a wise man that built his house*  
*upon a rock. So that if to be built upon a rock signi-*  
*fies infallibility, it belongs to every good man, who*  
*sincerely practiseth what he knows, as much as to a-*  
*ny church.*

When men are enabled by God to work miracles for the confirmation of the doctrines which they deliver, there is great reason to believe that they are *infallibly* assisted in the delivery of those doctrines: But without this, 'tis the vainest thing in the world, for any person or church to pretend to it; because they offer no evidence fit to satisfy any man, that they are assisted: And I do not hear that the pope, among all his privileges, does pretend to the power of miracles.

*Secondly,* From hence likewise we may infer the great reason of error and infidelity in the world. If any man be an infidel, it is not the fault of his understanding but of his will; it is not because there is not sufficient evidence that the christian religion is from God, but because mens interests and lusts make them partial and incompetent judges of matters of religion. The evidence of the christian religion is such, as recommends it to every man's reason and conscience; so that (as St. Paul argues) *if the Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ,*

SERM. *who is the image of God, should shine unto them, 2 Cor.*  
 XXXV 4. 3, 4.



If men did but stand indifferent for the entertainment of truth, and were not swayed by the interest of any lust or passion, I am confident that no man that hath the Gospel fairly proposed to him, would continue an infidel. If men did but truly live up to the principles of natural religion, they would easily be convinced, that the christian religion, which is so suitable thereto, is from God.

*Thirdly and lastly,* What hath been said, is a great argument and encouragement to obedience, and holiness of life. Do we desire not to be mistaken about the mind of God? Let us heartily endeavour to do his will. If we would not be seduced by the error of the wicked, let us take heed of their vicious practices. The best way certainly to preserve a right judgment in matters of religion, is to take great care of a good life. God's goodness is such, that he will not suffer any man's judgment to be betrayed into a damnable error, without some vice and fault of his will. The principles of natural religion are born with us, and imprinted upon our minds, so that no man can be ignorant of them, nor need to be mistaken about them; and as for those revelations which God hath made of himself to the world, he hath been pleased to accompany them with so much evidence, that an honest and sincere mind may easily discern them from error, and imposture. So our Saviour hath assured us, *That if any man desire to do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.*

On the other hand, if we see any oppose the clear truth, or depart from it, and embrace gross errors and delusions, we may almost certainly conclude, that there is some worldly interest or lust at the bottom of it. So our Saviour has likewise told us, *that the reason why men love darkness rather than light, is, because their deeds are evil; and every one that doth*

*evil*



*evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. I will conclude this whole discourse with St. Peter's exhortation, the 2d of Pet. 3. 17, 18. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware, lest ye also being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory, both now and for ever. Amen.*

---

## SERMON XXXVI.

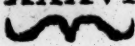
### The Nature of Covetousness.

---

✠ LUKE xii. 15.

*And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*

**A**MONG all the irregular appetites of SERM. men, there is none that is more common XXXVI and unreasonable, and of a more universal bad influence upon the hearts and lives of men, than this of *covetousness*; and therefore in speaking of this vice, I shall strike at the root of a great many others; even of apostasy from God's truth and religion, of which covetousness, and the love of this present world, is one of the most common causes. So that if I can contribute any thing to the cure of this great distemper of mens minds, I shall in so doing remove that, which is the cause and occasion of a great part of the evils and mischiefs which are in the world. And to this end I have

SERM. have pitched upon these words of our blessed Saviour  
 XXXVI to his hearers; *And he said unto them, take heed and*  
 *beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not*  
*in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*

In which words are these *three* things observable:

*First*, The *manner* of the caution which our Saviour here gives, *take heed and beware*; he doubles it, to shew the great need and concernment of it.

*Secondly*, The matter of the caution, or the vice which our Saviour here warns his hearers against, and that is *covetousness*: *take heed and beware of covetousness.*

*Thirdly*, The reason of this caution, *because a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.* Human life is sustained by a little, and therefore abundance is not necessary, either to the support, or comfort of it. 'Tis not a great estate and vast possessions that make a man happy in this world; but a mind that is equal to its condition, whatever it be.

*First*, The *manner* of the caution which our Saviour here gives, *take heed and beware.* This is a peculiar kind of caution, and no where else, or upon any other occasion that I know of, used in scripture; in which, for the greater emphasis and weight, the words of caution are doubled, as if the matter were of so much concernment, that no caution about it could be too much; to signify to us both the great danger of this sin of *covetousness*, and the great care men ought to use to preserve themselves from it.

I. The great danger of this sin; how apt we are to fall into this vice, and of how pernicious a consequence it is to those in whom it reigns.

1. How apt we are to fall into this vice: And excepting those vices which are immediately founded in a man's natural temper and constitution, there is none that men have a more natural propension to, than this of *covetousness*. For there are *two* things which human nature does more especially desire to be  
 secured

secured against, which are *want*, and *contempt*: and SERM. riches seem to be a certain remedy against both these XXXVI evils. And because men think they can never be sufficiently secured against these, therefore their desire of riches grows endless and insatiable; so that unless men be very jealous and watchful over themselves, this desire will grow upon them, and enlarge itself beyond all bounds.

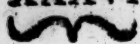
2. As men are very apt to fall into this vice, so is it of very pernicious consequence to those in whom it reigns. The mischief of it is very great, and very extensive: So St. Paul tells us, 1 Tim. 6. 8, 9, 10. where he presseth men to be contented with a small competency of the things of this life, because of the great danger and mischief of a covetous mind; *having food and raiment, let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich* (that is, they that are bent and resolved upon being rich) *fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil.* But this I shall speak more fully to, when I come to shew the great evil and unreasonableness of this vice.

II. This earnest kind of caution, as it signifies the great danger of this sin of *covetousness*, so likewise the great care that men ought to use to preserve themselves from it; for the greater the danger is in any kind, so much the greater care should be used for the avoiding of it. Men are not so solicitously concerned to defend themselves against a slight mischief; but when a terrible one threatens us, we should be continually upon our guard against it, and summon all our strength and force to resist it. Thus much for the *manner* of the caution.

I proceed to the *second* thing to be considered in the text, *viz.* the *matter* of the caution, or the vice which our Saviour here warns his hearers against, and that is *covetousness*; *take heed and beware of covetousness.*



SERM. *tousness*. And in speaking of this, I shall consider  
XXXVI these *two* things.



I. Wherein the nature of this vice consists.

II. I shall endeavour to shew the great evil and unreasonableness of it. I shall be large in both.

I. For the nature of this vice of *covetousness*. The shortest description that I can give of it is this; that it is *an inordinate desire and love of riches*; but when *this* desire and love are *inordinate*, is not so easy to be determined. And therefore that we may the better understand what this sin of *covetousness* is, which our Saviour doth so earnestly caution against, it will be requisite to consider more particularly wherein the vice and fault of it doth consist; that whilst we are speaking against *covetousness*, we may not under that general word condemn any thing that is commendable or lawful. To the end then that we may the more clearly and distinctly understand wherein the nature of this vice doth consist, I shall

*First*, endeavour to shew what is not condemned under this name of *covetousness*, either in scripture, or according to right reason: And,

*Secondly*, What is condemned by either of these as a plain instance or branch of this sin.

*First*, What things are not condemned under the name of *covetousness*, either in scripture, or according to right reason, which yet have some appearance of it; namely, these *three* things.

1. Not a provident care about the things of this present life.

2. Not a regular industry and diligence for the obtaining of them: Nor

3. Every degree of love and affection to them. I mention these *three*, because they may all seem to be condemned by scripture, as parts or degrees of this vice, but really are not.

1. Not a provident care about the things of this present life. This indeed seems to be condemned in scripture as a branch of *covetousness*; namely, in  
our

our Saviour's sermon upon the mount, *Matth. 6.* SERM. XXXVI  
 25. *Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on.* Here our Saviour seems to forbid all care, even about the necessities of life, meat, and drink, and cloathing; much more about the delights and conveniencies of it. But this is not absolutely, and in ordinary cases, intended by our Saviour to be condemned, as I shall shew by and by under the next head.

2. Neither is a regular industry and diligence for the obtaining of these things condemned in scripture; though this also seems to be prohibited by our Saviour in the same chapter, ver. 26. *Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them; and ver. 28. Why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin.* In which words our Saviour seems to intimate, that we ought to depend upon the providence of God for food and raiment, and to use no more industry for the obtaining of them, than the *fowls of the air* do, or the *lilies of the field*: And the same may seem to be collected out of this chapter of *St. Luke*: for after our Saviour had in my text cautioned them against covetousness, and spoken to them a parable to that purpose, of a *rich man who enlarged his barns, and laid up goods for many years*, he infers from thence, ver. 22. that men should take no thought for the things of this life, nor use any industry about them; and he said unto his disciples, *therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on.*

Now to avoid all inconvenience from our Saviour's words, I think that it is commonly said by interpreters, that he does here only condemn a distrustful and anxious care about the things of this life, and an over-solicitous industry and diligence for the obtaining

SERM. taining of them ; but that he allows a prudent care,  
 XXXVI and regular industry about these things: And this  
 were very well said, if it would agree with the scope  
 and design of our Saviour's discourse ; but the instan-  
 ces which he gives of *the fowls of the air*, and *the*  
*lilies of the field*, which are sufficiently provided for  
 without any care and industry of theirs, and which  
 he seems to set before us for a pattern, *behold* (says  
 he) *the fowls of the air*, I say these instances, which  
 he gives, seems to exclude even all regular and ordi-  
 nary care and diligence about these things.

What shall we say then that our Saviour intended  
 by his religion to take men off from all labour, and  
 industry in their callings ? This seems to be unrea-  
 sonable ; and indeed so it certainly were, if our Sa-  
 viour had given this for a standing and ordinary rule  
 to all Christians ; and not only so, but contrary to  
 the Apostles doctrine, who constantly charged Chris-  
 tians to labour with great diligence in their callings,  
 that they might be able to provide for themselves,  
 and their families.

But this discourse of our Saviour's was not intend-  
 ed for a general and standing rule to all Christians ;  
 but only designed for his disciples, to take *them* off  
 from all care about the things of this life, that they  
 might attend upon his person, and wholly give up  
 themselves to that work to which he had called them.  
 And therefore St. *Luke* takes notice, that after he  
 had cautioned his hearers in general against *covetous-*  
*ness*, he applies himself particularly to his disciples,  
 and tells them that he would have them so far from  
 this vice of *covetousness*, that they should not so much  
 as use that ordinary care and industry about the  
 things of this life, which is not only lawful, but  
 necessary for men in all ordinary cases, ver. 22.  
*And he said unto his disciples, therefore I say unto you,*  
*take no thought for your life, what you shall eat.* And  
 this agrees very well with the direction which our  
 Saviour gave to his disciples, when he first sent them  
 forth to preach, *Matth. 10. 9. Provide neither gold*  
*nor*



nor silver, nor brass in your purses, neither coat nor scrip; which no man ever understood as a general law to all Christians, but as a particular precept to the Apostles at that time. SERM. XXXVI

And if this be our Saviour's meaning, there is then no reason to think that this caution against covetousness does forbid men to use a provident care and regular industry about the things of this life.

3. Nor is every degree of love and affection to the things of this world condemned in scripture, as any branch, or part of this vice of covetousness; but such a love of the things of this world as is truly consistent with the love of God, and a due and serious care of our souls, is allowed both by scripture and reason. St. John indeed seems to condemn all love of the world, and of the things of it, as utterly inconsistent with the love of God, 1 John. 2. 15. *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him*: But this is according to the Hebrew phrase and manner of speaking, to forbid things absolutely, which are to be understood only comparatively. So Matth. 6. 19. *Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven; i. e. be not so solicitous for the good things of this world, as for the glory and happiness of the next.* And Luke 12. 4. *Be not afraid of them that kill the body; that is, fear them not so much as him that can destroy both body and soul in hell*: And Luke 14. 26. *If any man come unto me, and hate not his father and mother, and all that he hath; that is, if he do not love me more than all these things, he cannot be my disciple*: And John 6. 27. *Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life*; that is, labour not so much for the one as for the other, be not so solicitous about the things of this life, as about the great concerns of eternity. So likewise Colos. 3. 2. *Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth; i. e. set them more on things above, than on earthly things.* So here,  
love

SERM. *love not the world, neither the things of the world;*  
 XXXVI that is, do not over-value them, do not love them  
 so much as not to be able to part with them for  
 Christ; *for if any man thus love the world*, he does  
 not love God as he ought. So that when the scrip-  
 ture commands us, *not to love the world*, this is to  
 be understood *comparatively*, that we should not love  
 these things in comparison of God; and the great  
 concernments of another world: but it does not for-  
 bid us to love these things in a due degree, and with  
 a due subordination to those things which are more  
 excellent, and of infinitely greater concernment to  
 us. For nothing can be more inconsistent than to  
 recommend to men diligence in their worldly cal-  
 lings and employments (as the scripture frequently  
 does) and that in order to the attaining of the good  
 things of this life; and yet to forbid us to love these  
 things at all. For if men have no degree of love to  
 them, the best argument to diligence for the obtain-  
 ing of them would be taken away. Besides that we  
 are commanded in scripture to be thankful to God  
 for bestowing on us the blessings of this life; and we  
 are to love him upon this account. Now can any  
 man love the giver, for bestowing such gifts upon  
 him, which, if he do as he ought, he must not love?

You see then what those things are, which the  
 scripture does not condemn as any branch or degree  
 of this vice of *covetousness*; a provident care, and a  
 regular industry, and such a degree of love to the  
 things of this world, as is consistent with the love of  
 God, and the care of our souls.

*Secondly*, I come now to shew what is condemned  
 in scripture under the name of *covetousness*; and by  
 this we shall best understand wherein the nature of  
 this sin doth consist. Now *covetousness* is a word of a  
 large signification, and comprehends in it most of the  
 irregularities of mens minds, either in *desiring*, or  
*getting*, or in *possessing*, and *using* an estate. I shall  
 speak to each of these severally.

I. *Covetousness* in the desire of riches, consists in an SERM. eager and unsatiabie desire after the things of this XXXVI world. This the scripture condemns, though it be free from injustice, as it seldom happens to be. This insatiabie desire of wealth, God plainly condemns by his prophet, *Isa. 5. 8. Wo unto them that join house to house, and lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth.* And this it that which our Saviour here in the text seems to have a more particular respect to, when he cautions men against the sin of *covetousness*, as appears both from the reason which he gives of this caution, and from the parable whereby he illustrates it. From the reason which he gives of this caution, *take heed and beware of covetousness; for the life of man doth not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.* As if he had said, take great care to set some bounds to your desires after the things of this world. For whatever men may imagine, it is certain in experience, that it is not the abundance of outward things which makes the life of man happy. *Wealth and content* do not always dwell together; nay so far from that, that perhaps they very seldom meet.

And the parable likewise which follows upon this caution, doth sufficiently shew this to be our Saviour's meaning; for he illustrates what he was speaking of, by a rich man whose desire of wealth was never satisfied, but he was continually encreasing his estate and enlarging his barns, to make more room still for his fruits, that he might *lay up goods in store for many years.* The parable does not so much as intimate any indirect and unjust ways of gain, which this man used to encrease his estate; but condemns his insatiabie desire and thirst after more; so that even *this* alone is *covetousness*, and a great fault, though it were attended with no other; because it is unreasonable, and without end.



SERM. II. There is *covetousness* likewise in getting an estate; and the vice or evil of this kind of *covetousness* consists chiefly in these three things.

1. In the use of unlawful and unjust ways to get or increase an estate. He is a *covetous man*, who by the greediness of gain, is tempted to do any unjust action, whether it be in the way of fraud and deceit, or of violence and oppression. And this perhaps is that which is most frequently in scripture called *covetousness*. And this I take to be the meaning of the tenth commandment, *thou shalt not covet*; wherein is forbidden all unjust desire of that which is another man's, and all unjust endeavours and attempts to deprive him of it. For so our Saviour renders it, *Mark 10. 19.* where he says to *the young man* that came to be directed by him, *what good thing he should do, that he might inherit eternal life; thou knowest the commandments, do not commit adultery, do not kill, do not steal, do not bear false witness*; and then instead of the tenth commandment, *thou shalt not covet*, or rather by way of explication of it, he adds *μη ἀποστερήσης, defraud not*; as if he had said in a word, be not injurious to thy neighbour in any kind, in desiring or endeavouring to deprive him of any thing that is his. As the *Romans* in their laws were wont to comprehend those crimes which had no proper name, by the general name of *stellionatus*, and *dolus malus*; so here in the *decalogue*, after God had instanced in the chief and most common sorts of injuries which men are guilty of towards their neighbour, as *murder, adultery, theft, bearing of false witness*; he sums up all the rest, which could not so easily be reckoned particularly, in this short and general prohibition, *thou shalt not covet*; that is, thou shalt not be injurious to thy neighbour in any other kind; *in his wife, or servant, or house, or cattle, or any thing that is his. Covetousness*, or an inordinate desire of that which is our neighbour's, being commonly the root and parent of all those kind of injuries.

And

And for the same reason St. Matthew, instead of *the tenth commandment*, puts this general precept, *thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*, as being the sense of it in other words : *Matth. 19. 18, 19. thou shalt do no murder, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, honour thy father and thy mother, and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.* And this command of loving our neighbour as ourselves, our Saviour elsewhere tells us was the sum of the duties of the *second table* ; and it is the same in sense with that precept of our Saviour, *Matth. 7. 12. Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them.* That is, as thou wouldest have no man to be injurious to thee in any thing, so be not thou to any other man in any kind. And the Apostle, *Rom. 13. 8, 9, 10.* shews us upon what account this general precept, *thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*, is the sum of the *second table.* *He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law ; for this, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not covet ; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thy self.* And then he adds in the next words, *love worketh no ill to his neighbour ; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.* That is, he that truly loves his neighbour, will not be injurious to him in any kind : *Therefore love is the sum of the law.*

The design of all this is to shew, that he that is injurious to his neighbour in his estate in any kind, is properly guilty of the sin of *covetousness*, which is forbidden in the *tenth commandment.* So that all arts of fraud and oppression, whereby men endeavour to get and encrease an estate by the injury of their neighbour, is a branch of the sin of *covetousness.*

2. The vice of *covetousness* in getting wealth, does likewise consist in an anxious and tormenting care about obtaining the things of this life. The regu-

SERM. XXXVI. lar and due temper of a man's mind about the things of this world, is to commit ourselves to the providence of God in the use of honest and lawful endeavours, and to refer the success of all to his good pleasure; and whatsoever is beyond this, is a branch from the evil root of *covetousness*. We distrust the providence of God, when after we have used our best endeavours, and begged his blessing upon them, we torment ourselves about the issue and event of things. And as this is sinful, so it is vain, and to no purpose. Diligence in our business is the way to get an estate; but no man was ever the richer for tormenting himself, because he is not so. The reason why men seek the things of this world, and take pains to get them, is to make life convenient and comfortable; and consequently he that torments himself about the getting of these things, contradicts himself in his own design, because he makes his life *miserable*, that he may make it *comfortable*.

3. The sin of *covetousness* in *getting*, consists in seeking the things of this life, with the neglect of things infinitely better, and which are of far greater and nearer concernment to us. He is a *covetous man*, who so minds the world, as to neglect God, and his soul; who is so busy and intent upon making provision for this life, as to take no care of the other; so concerned for a few days of his pilgrimage here, as to have no consideration and regard for his eternal abode in another world. God allows us to provide for this life, and considers the necessities which do continually press us while we are in the body: but while we are making provision for these *dying bodies*, he expects that we should remember that we have *immortal souls*: which since they are to have an endless duration in another world, ought to be provided for with far greater care. 'Tis an inordinate desire of riches, when men so lay out all their care and industry for the obtaining of them, as if nothing else were to be regarded, as if no consideration



tion at all were to be had of another world, and of **SERM.**  
that better part of ourselves which is to continue **XXXVI**  
and live for ever. All desires and endeavours after  
riches, which take men off from the business of religion,  
and the care of their souls, which allow men neither the  
leisure and opportunity, nor the heart and affection to love  
God, and to serve him, are to be referred to the sin of *covetousness*,  
which is here condemned by our Saviour in the *text*.

III. There is *covetousness* likewise in *possessing or using*  
an estate: And this consists chiefly in these *three* things.

*First*, When men are fordid towards themselves, and cannot find in their hearts to use and enjoy what they possess; are continually adding to their estate, without any design of enjoyment; and take infinite pains to raise a huge fortune, not that they may use it, but that they may be said to have it. This is a degree of covetousness even beyond that of the rich man in the parable after the *text*: for he, it seems, after he had *enlarged his barns* to his mind and *laid up goods for many years*, designed at last to have *taken his ease* and have fallen to the enjoyment of what he had gotten; *to have eat and drank, and to have been merry*; and this, though it proved but a foolish design in the issue, he being *cut off in that very instant* when he was come to the point of satisfaction and enjoyment; yet is it infinitely more reasonable, than to take great pains to get an estate with a full resolution never to be the better for it.

*Secondly*, Men are *covetous* in *keeping an estate*, when they do not use it charitably; when they cannot find in their hearts to spare any thing out of their abundance, to the relief of those who are in want. Though a man get an estate without *covetousness*, and have an heart to enjoy it, yet so far he is *covetous*, as he is *uncharitable*. He loves money more than he ought, who having enough to spare, chuseth rather to keep it, than to do good with it, and to use it to

SERM. one of the principal ends for which God gives an  
XXXVI estate.

 Thirdly, They likewise are *covetous*, who place their chief trust and happiness in riches, who (as the expression is, *Job 31. 24.*) *make gold their hope, and say to the fine gold thou art my confidence.* And this is the reason why *covetousness* is so often in scripture call'd *idolatry*; because the *covetous* man sets up his riches in the place of *God*, putting his trust and confidence in them, and setting his whole heart upon them, loving them as he should love *God only, with all his heart, and soul, and strength*: And therefore *Mammon*, which signifies *riches*, is in scripture represented as a *deity*, and the *covetous man*, as a servant, or worshipper of *Mammon*.

So that in scripture he is a *covetous* man who placeth his chief felicity in a great fortune, and will venture to lose any thing, rather than to part with *that*; who will quit his religion, and violate his conscience, and run the hazard of his soul, rather than forfeit his estate, or the hopes of advancing it to his mind.

And this in times of tryal and difficulty, is the great temptation to which the *covetous man* is exposed. When a man may not only save himself, but get considerable advantage by departing from the truth; and in changing his religion, may have a good sum of money to boot, or which is equal to it, a good place; this to a *covetous mind* is a very strong temptation, and almost irresistible. When error and delusion can bid so high, and offer so good terms, no wonder if it gain some profelytes among the *covetous* and *ambitious* part of mankind. This the Apostle gives warning of, as a great temptation to rich men in times of suffering, *1 Tim. 6. 9, 10.* *They that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare: for the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some have lusted after, they have erred from the faith.* The young man in the Gospel is a  
sad

sad instance of this kind, who chose rather to leave Christ, than to part with his great possessions. And such a one was *Demas, who forsook the Apostles, and christianity itself, to cleave to this present world.*

Thus I have done with the first thing I proposed to speak to, the nature of this vice, which our Saviour in the *text* cautions men so earnestly against; *take heed and beware of covetousness.* I shall now proceed in the *second* place to shew the evil and unreasonableness of this vice: But that shall be the subject of another discourse.

---

## SERMON XXXVII. The second Sermon on this Text.

The Evil and Unreasonableness of Covetousness.

---

LUKE xii, 15.

*And he said unto them, Take heed and beware of Covetousness; for a Man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth.*

I Have made entrance into a discourse upon these SERM. XXXVII words, in which I have told you there are *three* things observable.

*First, The manner of the caution, which our Saviour here gives, take heed and beware.*

*Secondly, The matter of the caution, or the sin which our Saviour here warns his hearers against, take heed, and beware of covetousness: And*

*Thirdly, The reason of this caution, because a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*



SERM. In discoursing of the *second* of these, viz. the *main*  
 XXXVII *ter* of the caution, I proposed,

1. To consider wherein the nature of this vice of *covetousness* does consist.

2. To shew the evil and unreasonableness of it.

The *first* of these I have dispatched, and now go on to the *second*, viz. To shew the great evil, and unreasonableness of the vice of *covetousness*.

Now *covetousness* will appear to be very evil, and unreasonable, upon these following accounts.

I. Because it takes men off from religion, and the care of their souls.

II. Because it tempts men to do many things which are inconsistent with religion, and directly contrary to it.

III. Because it is an endless and insatiable desire.

IV. Because the happiness of human life doth not consist in riches.

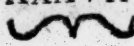
V. Because riches do very often contribute very much to the misery and infelicity of men.

*First*, *covetousness* takes men off from religion, and the care of their souls. The *covetous man* is wholly intent upon this world; and his inordinate desire after these things, makes him to neglect God, and the eternal concerns of his soul. He employs all his time, and care, and thoughts about these temporal things, and his vehement love and eager pursuit of these things steals away his heart from God, robs him of his time, and of all opportunities for his soul, and diverts him from all serious thoughts of another world, and the life to come. And the reason of this is that which our Saviour gives, *Matth.* 6. 24. *No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God, and Mammon.* No man can serve two masters so different as God and the world are; because they will give cross commands, and enjoin contrary things. God calls upon us to mind the duties of his  
 worship

worship and service, to have a serious regard to religion, and a diligent care of our souls : but the cares of the world, and the importunities of business, and an eager appetite of being rich, calls us off from these divine and spiritual employments, or disturb us, in them. God calls upon us to be charitable to those that are in want, to be willing to distribute, and ready to communicate to the necessities of our brethren ; but our covetousness pulls us back, and hales us another way, and checks all merciful and charitable inclinations in us. God calls us to self-denial, and suffering for the sake of him, and his truth, and commands us to prefer the keeping of faith and a good conscience, to all worldly considerations whatsoever : But the world inspires us with other thoughts, and whispers to us *to save ourselves, not to be righteous over much*, and rather to trust God with our souls, than men with our bodies and estates.

If we set our hearts and affections strongly upon any thing, they will partake of the object which they are conversant about ; for *where our treasure is (as our Lord hath told us) there will our hearts be also*. If a great estate be our chief end and design, if riches be our treasure, and our happiness, our hearts will be found *among the stuff*. We cannot bestow our affections freely upon *two* objects. We cannot intensely love God, and the world ; for no man can have *two* ultimate ends, *two* principal designs. Our *riches may increase*, but if we *set our hearts upon them*, and give them the chief place in our affections, we make them our Lord and Master. Whatever we make our ultimate end, we give it a sovereignty and empire over us ; we put ourselves under its dominion, and make ourselves subject to all its commands. So that if *it bid us go, we must go ; come, we must come ; do this, we must do it ; because we are under authority* : The world is our master, and we are its slaves. Now he that is under the rule and dominion of this master,

SERM. must withdraw his obedience from God, and in many  
XXXVII cases decline obedience to his laws.

 This worldly covetous disposition was that which made those in the parable to make so many excuses, when they were invited to the supper, *Luke 14. 18. One had bought a farm, and he could not come: Another had bought so many yoke of oxen, and therefore he desired to be excused.* Riches do so fill the covetous man's heart, and the cares of the world so possess his mind, that he hath no room left in his soul for any other guests: *Intus existens prohibet alienum, that which is full already can receive no more.* The covetous man's heart is taken up with such things as keep out God, and Christ, and better things. *If any man love the world, and the things of it, to this degree, St. John tells us that the love of the Father is not in him.* In the parable of the sower, *Matth. 13. 7.* our Saviour represents to us, *the cares of the world, which choke the word of God, by thorns which sprung up among the seed, and stifled the growth of it.* The cares of the world will not suffer the word of God to take deep root in our hearts, and to have any permanent effect upon them: And *Ezek. 33. 31.* God gives this as a reason why the people of *Israel* would not hearken to the words of his prophet, because their hearts were upon the world. *They come unto thee (says God there to the prophet) as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they shew much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness.* A heart that is deeply engaged in the world, will stand out against all the invitations, and promises, and threatnings of God's word. When the word of God invites such persons, it is like making love to those who have already fixed their hearts and affections elsewhere; the promises and threatnings of the Gospel signify but very little to such men, because their hearts are set upon worldly things, and all their affections are bent that way; all their hopes  
and



and desires are worldly ; to be rich and abound in SERM.  
wealth ; and all their fears are of poverty and loss. XXXVII  
Now such a man can only be moved with the pro-  
mises and threatnings of temporal things ; for no  
promises have any effect upon us, but such as are of  
some good, which we care for and value : Nor are  
any threatnings apt to move us, but such as are of  
some evil which we dread, and are afraid of. And  
therefore when eternal life, and the happiness of a-  
nother world, are offered to a worldly-minded man,  
he does not desire it, he is not at all sensible of the  
value of it ; the man's heart is full already of other  
hopes and desires, and *the full soul loathed the honey-*  
*comb*. Promise to such a man the kingdom of heaven,  
and the pleasures of God's presence, and the joys of  
eternity, this does not signify to such a man any  
good or happiness that he is sensible of, or knows  
how to relish. And on the other hand, threaten him  
with the loss of God, and eternal separation from  
the fountain of happiness, and with the unspeakable  
anguish and torments of a long eternity ; these  
things, though they be terrible, yet they are at a  
distance, and the covetous man is inured to sense,  
and is only to be moved with things present and sen-  
sible ; he cannot extend his fears so far as another  
world, so long as he finds himself well and at ease,  
as to the things of this present life.

If we would affect such a man, we must offer to  
his consideration something that is fit to work upon  
him ; threaten him with breaking open his house,  
and rifling his coffers, and carrying away his full  
bags ; with questioning his title to his estate, or start-  
ing a precedent mortgage, or something of the like  
nature : these things indeed are dreadful and terrible  
to him ; now you speak intelligibly to him, and he  
understands what you mean : Tell him of a good bar-  
gain, or an advantageous purchase, offer him de-  
cently a good bribe, or give him notice of a young  
heir that may be circumvented, and drawn in, then  
you

SERM. then you say something to him that is worthy of his  
 XXXVII regard and attention; the man may be tempted by  
 such offers and promises as these: but discourse to him  
*with the tongue of men and Angels*, of the excellency of  
 virtue and goodness, and of the necessity of it to the  
 obtaining of a glory and happiness that shall neither  
 have bounds nor end; and *lo! thou art unto him as*  
*a lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can*  
*play well upon an instrument; for he hears thy words,*  
*but he will not do them;* as the prophet expresseth it,  
*Ezek. 33. 32.* Such discourses as these they look  
 upon as fine talk, or a melodious sound, that va-  
 nisheth into air, but leaves no impression behind it.  
 Perhaps even these dull and stupid kind of men are  
 affected a little for the present with the liveliness of  
 the romance, and poetical vein of the preacher; but  
 these things *pass away like a tale that is told*, but have  
 no lasting effect upon them. So effectually doth co-  
 vetousness and the love of this present world, obstruct  
 all those passages, through which the consideration  
 of religion and heavenly things should enter into  
 our minds.

*Secondly*, As covetousness hinders men from reli-  
 gion, and takes them off from a due care of their  
 souls; so it many times tempts and engageth men to  
 do many things contrary to religion, and inconsistent  
 with it: It is the natural source and fountain of a  
 great many evils, and the parent of most of the worst  
 of vices. He that will engage deep in the world, must  
 use much more guard and caution than most men  
 do, to do it without sin. How many temptations is  
 the covetous man exposed to in the *getting*, and in  
 the *securing*, and in the *spending* and *enjoying* of a  
 great estate? It is no easy task to reckon them up,  
 and much more difficult to escape or resist them,  
 and yet each of these temptations brings him into  
 the dangers of a great many sins. For,

I. In the getting of an estate, he is exposed to  
 all those vices which may seem to be serviceable to  
 this

this design. Nothing hath been the cause of more **SERM.**  
and greater sins in the world, than *covetousness*, and **XXXVII**  
*making haste to be rich*. It is Solomon's observation,   
*Prov. 28. 20. He that maketh haste to be rich, shall*  
*not be innocent*. He does not say he cannot be inno-  
cent, but he speaks as if there were all the probability  
in the world that he will not prove to be so; but be-  
ing in so much *haste*, will almost unavoidably fall  
into a great many oversights and faults. And the  
*beatben* poet makes the same observation in more  
words.

*Inde ferè scelerum causæ, nec plura venena  
Miscuit, aut ferro grassatur sæpius ullum  
Humanæ mentis vitium, quàm sæva cupido  
Immodici Censûs: nam dives qui fieri vult,  
Et citò vult fieri; sed quæ reverentia legum,  
Quis metus aut pudor est unquam properantis avari?*

“ This, says he, is the cause of most sins: nor is  
“ there any vice of which the mind of man is ca-  
“ pable, that hath been guilty of more murders and  
“ poysonings, than a furious desire of immoderate  
“ wealth; for he that *will be rich*, will *make haste*  
“ to be so: And what reverence of laws, what fear  
“ of shame, was ever seen in any man that was in  
“ haste to be rich?” And this is the sense of what  
the Apostle says concerning this vice of *covetousness*,  
this peremptory resolution of being rich 1, *Tim. 6. 9,*  
*10. They that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a*  
*snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which*  
*drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love*  
*of money is the root of all evil*. If this vice of *cove-*  
*tousness* once reign in us, if we have once fixed our  
end, and set up this resolution with ourselves, that  
*we will be rich*, we shall then make every thing stoop  
and submit to this design. A covetous man will  
make his principles and his conscience to bend to his  
resolution of being rich, and to bow to that interest.  
The



SERM. The eager desire of riches makes men to pursue  
 XXXVII them in indirect and uncharitable ways by falshood and perjury. by undermining and over-reaching, by dissembling and flattery, by corrupting and imbasing of commodities, by false weights and measures, by taking fees with both hands, and making use of their power and wit to oppress and defraud their brother, by imposing upon his ignorance and simplicity, or by making a prey of his poverty and necessity.

*Covetousness* many times makes men cruel and unjust; nay, it makes them guilty of the worst sort of cruelty and oppression. For (as one says well) the covetous man oppresseth his neighbour, not for any good to himself; for he does not enjoy what he tears and rends from others; so that he is of that most hateful kind of beast of prey, that kill other creatures, not to eat them, but that they may see them lie dead by them. Lions and wolves kill out of hunger; but the covetous man like a serpent or scorpion, stings and bites others to death, not for his need but for his pleasure and recreation. *Covetousness* is the parent of the most monstrous sins; because it fixeth a man in a resolution of getting an estate by any means. If falseness and deceit, violence and oppression will further this end; the earnest desire of the end tempts men to use any sort of means whereby the end may be compassed; and though a man may have some averfeness from them at first, yet that wears off by degrees, and the strong desire of the end, reconciles a man at last to the love and liking of the means, how wicked and unwarrantable soever, *Covetousness* tempted *Achan* to steal the accursed thing, and *Gebazi* to lye to the prophet, and *Ahab* to oppress and murder *Naboth*. Nay, a small sum tempted the covetous mind of *Judas* to betray his master, and his Saviour. And how do many men every day strain their consciences to get an estate,

estate, and hazard their own souls for money; nay **SERM.**  
exchange their souls, which are of more value than **XXXVII**  
the whole world, for a very small portion of it? 

II. There are likewise many other temptations which a covetous man is exposed to in the *keeping* and *securing* of an estate when he hath got it. A covetous and worldly minded man, when it comes to the trial, is in great danger of quitting his religion, and *making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience*. When his estate comes to be in hazard, he is very apt to fall off from the truth; 'tis an hundred to one but in these circumstances, he will chuse rather to violate his conscience, than to forfeit his estate. What the devil falsely said of *Job*, is true of the covetous man, *he does not serve God for nought*. Upon these terms it was that Christ and the young man parted; he *had great possessions*, and it troubled him to part with them. When *Demas* was brought to the tryal, and put to it, whether he would stick to the profession of the Gospel, or his worldly possessions, he quitted *St. Paul* and declared for the world, *2, Tim. 4. 10. Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world*. So far had his covetous humour besotted him, as to make him prefer his present interest in these temporal things, before those eternal rewards which the Gospel offered.

III. There are likewise many temptations which men are exposed to in the *injoying* and *spending* of a great estate. It is hard to have a great estate, and not to be mastered by the love of it; nor to have our cares and thoughts, our hearts and affections swallowed up by it. 'Tis no easy thing for a man that hath riches, not to overvalue them, and love them more than he ought; not to be puffed up by them, and so place his trust and confidence in them, *Prov. 18. 11. The rich man's wealth is his strong city, and as an high wall in his own conceit*. The covetous man setteth up his riches in the place of God, and is apt to fall down before this golden calf, and worship it:

SERM. *it: To say to the gold, thou art my hope, and to the fine*  
 XXXVII *gold, thou art my confidence: To rejoyce, because his*  
*wealth is great, and because his hand hath gotten*  
*much.*

Riches are a great temptation to irreligion and atheism. Upon this account *Agur* wisely prays to God for a moderate estate because of the danger of both the extremes of riches and poverty; because of the great and violent temptations which men are exposed to in both these conditions, *Prov. 38. 9. Give me neither poverty nor riches, but feed me with food convenient for me.* Why not riches? *Lest I be full and deny thee, and say, who is the Lord?* And much more do riches tempt men to pride and insolence towards others *Prov, 18. 23. The poor useth entreaties, but the rich answereth roughly.* Mens spirits are commonly blown up and bloated with their fortunes, and their pride, and stomach, and passion, do usually encrease in proportion to their wealth.

And many times riches tempt men to luxury and intemperance, and all manner of excess. Rich men have a mighty temptation to allow themselves all manner of unlawful pleasure; because he who hath a great estate, is furnished with that to which hardly any thing can be denied. And this is not inconsistent with a covetous humour; for there are, many times, men who are covetous in getting, for no other end and reason, but that they may *spend it upon their lusts.* As covetousness sometimes starves other vices, so sometimes it serves them, and is made subordinate to a man's ambition, or lust, or some other reigning vice. There is no such absolute inconsistency between riches and virtue, but that it is possible that a man that is very rich may be very good. But yet if we consult experience, I doubt it will be found a true observation, that there are but very few rich men, who are not insupportable, either for their *vanity*, or their *vices*; so that our Saviour had reason for that severe question, *How hard is it*  
*for*



for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God? And SERM. well might he upon this account pronounce the poor XXXVII  
(the poor in estate, as well as the poor in spirit) blessed, as we find he does, Luke 6. 20. *Blessed be ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.* They oftener enter there than the rich.

Thirdly, *Covetousness* is likewise evil and unreasonable, because it is an endless and insatiable desire. A covetous mind may propose to itself some certain bounds and limits, and a man may think that when he is arrived to such an estate, and hath raised his fortune to such a pitch, that he will then sit down, contented and satisfied, and will seek after no more. But he deceives himself in this matter; for when he hath attained to that which he proposed to himself, he will be never the nearer being satisfied. So Solomon tells us, *Eccles. 5. 10. He that loveth silver, shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance, with increase;* for no degree of wealth can satisfy a covetous mind. He may think so beforehand, that if he had so much it would be enough; but when he hath attained it, he will be still reaching after more; for *covetousness* is a disease of the mind, and an unnatural thirst, which is inflamed by that which should quench it. Every desire that is natural, is satisfied and at rest, when it hath once obtained the thing it desired. If a man be hungry, he is satisfied when he hath eaten; or if he be thirsty, the thirst is allayed and quenched when he hath drank to such a proportion as nature doth require; and if he eat and drink beyond this measure, nature is oppressed, and it is a burthen to him. But *Covetousness* is not the thirst of nature, but of a diseased mind. It is the thirst of a fever, or of a dropsey; the more a man drinks, the more he desires, and the more he is inflamed. In like manner, the more the covetous man encreaseth his estate, the more his desires are enlarged and extended, and he finds continually new occasions and new necessities; and every day as he

SERM. grows richer, he discovers new wants; and a new poverty  
 XXXVII verty to be provided against, which he did not think  
 of before, comes into his mind: *Et minus hæc optat, qui non habet; and he that is without these things, covets them less than he that hath them.* So far is a covetous man's attaining to riches from giving him satisfaction, that he who hath scarce any thing at all, is many times much nearer to contentment, than he that hath got so much; nay so unreasonable is this appetite, as to desire more, even when the man knows not how to bestow what he hath already. This Solomon observed long since (for the vices and humours of men are much the same in all ages) *Eccles. 4. 8. There is one alone, and there is not a second; yea, he hath neither child nor brother; yet there is no end of all his labours, neither is his eye satisfied with riches, neither saith he, for whom do I labour, and bereave my soul of good? This is also vanity, yea, it is a sore travel.* And indeed what can be greater vanity and folly, than to be at certain pains and labour all the days of a man's life, and yet to be uncertain all the while, for whom it is that he drudgeth, and taketh all these pains.

And if this be the nature of this vice, the more it gets, still to covet the more; then nothing can be more unreasonable, than to think to gratify this appetite; because at this rate, the man can never be contented, because he can never have enough; nay, so far is it from that, that every new accession to his fortune, sets his desires one degree farther from rest and satisfaction: For a covetous mind having no bounds, it is very probable that the man's desire will encrease much faster than his estate; and then the richer he is, he is still the poorer, because he is still the less contented with his condition. However, it is impossible that the man's desire should ever be satisfied; for desire being always first, if the man's desire of riches advanceth and goes forward as fast as riches follow, then it is not possible for riches ever to overtake the desire of them, no more than the hinder

der wheels of a coach can overtake those which are before: because as they were at a distance at first setting out, so let them go never so far, or so fast, they keep the same distance still. SERM. XXXVII

So that it is the vainest thing in the world, for a man to design his own satisfaction by the perpetual increase of his fortune, because contentment doth not arise from *the abundance of what a man hath*, but it must spring from the inward frame and temper of our minds; and the true way to it, is not to enlarge our estate, but to contract our desires; and then it is possible that a man's money and his mind may meet; otherwise the pursuit is endless, and the farther a man follows contentment, it will but flee so much the farther from him; and when he hath attained the estate of a prince, and a revenue as great as that of *France*, or the *Turkish* empire, he shall be farther from being satisfied, than when he began the world and had no more beforehand than would just pay for his next meal.

I should now have proceeded to the *fourth* thing, whereby the unreasonableness of *covetousness* doth appear; because the happiness of human life doth not consist in riches. And this is the argument which I shall more especially insist upon, because it is that which our Saviour useth here in the *text*, to take men off from this vice. *The life of man consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth*. And this certainly is one of the best and most reasonable considerations in the world, to moderate mens affections toward these things. Every reasonable desire propounds some end to itself. Now to what purpose should any man desire to encrease his wealth so vastly beyond the proportion of his necessities, and real occasions? What benefit and advantage would it be to any man, to have an hundred times more than he knows what to do withal? But I shall not enlarge upon this argument at present, but refer it to another opportunity.



*The Third  
Sermon on  
this Text.*

# SERMON XXXVIII.

## The Evil and Unreasonableness of Covetousness.

X LUKE xii. 15.

*And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of Covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*

SERM.  
XXXVIII

**A**FTER I had in my first discourse upon this subject, given you an account of the nature of the vice of covetousness, I proceeded in the next place to represent the great evil and unreasonableness of it.

*First*, Because it takes men off from religion, and the care of their souls.

*Secondly*, Because it tempts men to many things which are inconsistent with religion, and directly contrary to it.

*Thirdly*, Because it is an endless and insatiable desire. Thus far I have gone; I proceed to the

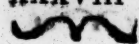
*Fourth* thing, whereby the unreasonableness of covetousness will yet farther appear: Namely, because the happiness of human life doth not consist in riches, and abundance. And this I shall insist upon somewhat the more largely, because it is the argument which our Saviour makes use of here in the text, to take men off from this sin. *The life of man consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. Therefore take heed and beware of covetousness.* And this certainly is one of the best and most reasonable

nable considerations in the world, to moderate our SERM. XXXVIII  
affections towards these things. For every reasonable desire propounds some end to itself. Now to what purpose should any man desire to increase his wealth so vastly, and beyond the proportion of his necessities and real occasions? What benefit and advantage could it be to any man, to have an hundred, or perhaps a thousand times more than he knows what to do withal?

And as for the other world, no man ever pretended that the heaping up riches here, would be useful to him there; *riches will not deliver him in the day of wrath.* No man was ever so senseless, as to imagine that he could take his estate along with him into the other world; or if he could, that heaven was to be bought with money; or that a great estate, or a great many lordships would recommend him to the favour of God. 'Tis true indeed, a man may so use riches in the world, as thereby to promote and further his happiness in the next. But then it is likewise as true, that a man may so demean himself in a poor and low condition, as thereby to render himself as acceptable to God, and capable of as great a reward, as the richest man can do. The poor woman's *two mites* chearfully given to pious and charitable uses, will go as far in the other world, and find as great a reward there, as the rich man's *thousands of gold and silver.* And a man may be as truly generous and charitable out of a little, as out of the greatest fortune. Besides that the poor man's contentedness in a mean condition, is more admirable in itself, and more valuable with God, than for a rich man to be so.

So that the great use of riches respects this world, and the best use of them is in ways of charity; and the poor man's charity, though it cannot be of so great an extent in the effects of it, yet in the degree of its virtue and merit it may be equal to it.

SERM.  
XXXVIII



Now the *two* great designs of men, in regard to this world, are these.

1. To maintain and support our lives as long as we can.

2. To make our lives as truly happy and comfortable as we can.

To the *first* of these ends, namely, the support of our lives, a very little will suffice; and 'tis not much that is necessary to the *other*, to render our lives as truly comfortable as this world can make them; so that a vast estate is not necessary to either of these ends; for a man may *live* by having what is necessary, and may *live comfortably* by having that which is convenient.

No man lives the longer by having abundance; it is many times an occasion of shortning a man's life, by ministring to excess and intemperance; but seldom of prolonging it. And setting aside the vain fancy and conceit of men, no man lives the more happily, for having more than he hath real use and occasion for.

These *two* heads, I shall a present speak to, to make out the full force of this reason, which our Saviour here useth; namely, *that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth*.

I. That riches do not contribute to the support of our lives; nor

II. To the happiness and comfort of them. That is, they are not necessary to either of these ends. For by *riches* I mean, *whatever is beyond a sufficient competency of those things, which are requisite to the real uses and occasions of human life*.

*First*, Riches and abundance do not contribute to the support of our lives. And this our saviour very well represents to us in the parable immediately after the *text*, of the *rich man*, who was continually increasing his estate, so that *he had goods laid up for many years*; but he lived not one jot the longer for being



being provided of the conveniences of life for so long a time beforehand; for whilst he was blessing himself, as if he had secured his happiness sufficiently for this world, he was uncertain of his continuance in it; God having decreed to take him out of this world, at that very time when he had determined to enter upon the enjoyment of those things, which he had been so long laying up. God says to him, *thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee; and then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?* that is, what good then will all these things do thee, when thou hast no further use of, and occasion for them? So that if he had been the poorest man in the world, and had not been provided for the next meal, he might have lived as long as he did with all his stores. You see that in this sense, *a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.* For notwithstanding all his great barns, and the abundance of fruits he had stowed in them, he did not live one jot the longer, than the poorest man might have done.

*Secondly,* Nor do riches contribute to the happiness and comfort of our lives. Happiness is not to be bought and purchased together with great lordships; it depends upon a great many causes, among which a competency of the things of this world is one; but the riches and abundance is none of them. The happiness of this world consists in these *two* things.

1. In the enjoyment of good. And,
2. In a state of freedom from evil.

Now riches do not necessarily make a man happy in either of these respects.

*First,* For the enjoyment of good, a competent estate suitable to the condition and station in which God hath set us in this world, will give a man whatever nature and reason can desire; an abundance cannot make a man happier. If a man had an hun-

SERM.  
XXXVIII.

dred times more than he needed, he could but enjoy it according to the capacity of a man; for if he consulted his own happiness, and would truly enjoy what he hath, he must eat and drink within the bounds of temperance and health, and must wear no more cloaths than are for his convenience. 'Tis true, he hath wherewithal to put on a new suit every day; which is to be uneasy all the days of his life: and may drink, if he pleases, every time out of a new cup; which would be a vain expence, and a great trouble to his servants, without any manner of convenience to himself.

But then if riches fall into the *covetous* man's hands, they can be no happiness to him, because he hath no heart to enjoy them. He hath indeed the estate of a rich man, but he wants the comfort of it, because he hath the mind of a poor man; and enjoyment is all the felicity that is in a great fortune; what we enjoy is ours, but what we lay up, is from that time not ours, but some body's else. He that heaps up riches, and enjoys them not, is rich only for his heir, but a beggar for himself.

We are apt to pity poor men, and too apt to despise them; but surely no man's condition is more to be deplored than his, who starves himself in the midst of plenty, and being surrounded with the blessings of God, turns them into the greatest curse; for it is a much greater curse, not to use an estate when one has it, than not to have it. It is like a plentiful table without an appetite.

But it may be it is a great happiness to have a great estate, though a man never use it; the pleasure of seeing it, and telling it over, may be like the removing of billets; which may warm a man as much as if he had spent and consumed them. But *this is real*, and the other only *imaginary*. I doubt not, many covetous men take a great deal of pleasure in ruminating upon their wealth, and in recounting what they have; but they have a great deal

deal of tormenting care and fear about it, and if they had not, it is very hard to understand where the reasonable pleasure and happiness lies of having things to no end. It is at the best, like that of some foolish birds, which, they say, take pleasure in stealing money, that they may hide it; as if it were worth the while for men to take pains to dig silver out of the earth, for no other purpose, but to melt it down and stamp it, and bury it there again.

SERM.  
XXXVIII.

But many necessities may happen, which we cannot foresee, and it is good to provide against them. There is nothing so bad, but something may be said in excuse of it; and I do not deny, but that a provident care against the common accidents of human life is very commendable; but it is unreasonable to think of providing against all possibilities, which it is impossible either to foresee or prevent. 'Tis very possible, that after a man hath gotten the greatest estate imaginable, he may lose it all by some fatal accident; and then to what purpose was all this provision made, when that which was so long a time a getting and laying up, is lost at once?

Besides, that it is not easy to conceive what necessity can happen to a *covetous* man, to give him an occasion of using his estate; he cannot find in his heart to bestow it upon himself in such things as are convenient, nay, almost necessary for the support of his life; for no man can feed his servants more penuriously than he does himself; all the religion he values himself upon, is a strict observance of the *Levitical* diet, which he recommends to those few that can deny themselves to dine with him, in hopes to make better meals upon his estate when he is gone. And if he be so penurious to himself, the necessities of others are not like to move him to be liberal. I can but imagine one occasion that could tempt such a man to lay out what he hath; namely, when one part of his estate is in danger, to spend the other to secure it. And yet even in that case, if his cause

were



SERM.  
XXXVIII.

were not very clear and good, he would go nigh to lose it, by using it as he does himself; that is, by starving it. And if this be all, then a man had as good be without an estate, and save himself the trouble either of getting it, or securing it; for if it were all gone, he might live as well as he does, and that with half the care and pains.

*Secondly*, The happiness of this world consists in a state of freedom from evil. Now the great evils that men are liable to in this world, are such as are incident to them, either in the course of their lives, or at the time of their death; and riches do not contribute to mens happiness, by freeing them from either of these. I shall speak to these severally.

I. Not from the evils which are incident to men in the course of their lives. These are of *two* kinds, *inward*, or *outward*.

1. *Inward* evils, by which I mean those of the mind; and our greatest troubles are from within, from the anxiety of our minds, and the guilt of our consciences, from the vicious inclinations of our wills, and the irregularity and disorders of our passions. Now riches were an admirable thing indeed, and worth our coveting, if they would help to cure these distempers of our minds; but they are the least fitted for such a purpose of any thing in the world; for not he that hath the greatest estate, but he that hath the fewest and most reasonable desires, and the best governed passions, and the most virtuous inclinations, is the happiest man, and dwells nearest to satisfaction. *Nemo malus felix, no bad man can be happy*, though he were possessed of the whole world; because he hath that within him, which frets and discontents him, which galls his spirit, and keeps his mind restless and uneasy; and he that does not enjoy *himself*, can enjoy nothing else.

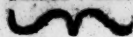
Did but men know how much happiness hath been enjoyed by many a pious and virtuous man in a mean fortune, how quiet and easy their minds have been,

been, how much fuller of joy and pleasure, than the heart of any covetous worldling ever was in his most prosperous estate, and when *his corn, and wine, and oyl abounded*; did we (I say) but know this, we should not envy the men of mighty fortunes. *Nam neque divitibus contingunt gaudia solis. Rich men are not the only happy people in the world.* If they be not good as well as rich, happiness is a greater stranger to their dwellings, than to the cottages of poorer men.

Now riches are so far from helping to make men good, that they are one of the greatest temptations to them in the world to be otherwise; which is the reason why our Saviour says, *it is so very hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven*; because considering the powerful, and almost irresistible temptations of a great estate, and the impotency and weakness of human nature to govern itself in a plentiful fortune, it is very hard for a rich man to be so good as he ought, it requires a great force and firmness of resolution, a very solid and vigorous constitution of mind, to bear a great fortune, and not to be corrupted by it; and a man hath never more reason to implore God's gracious help and assistance, and to consult his own best and coolest thoughts, to know what he ought to do, and how he ought to demean himself, than when the outward blessings of this life flow in a main upon him; *felicitate corrumpimur, nothing sooner debaucheth men than prosperity*; and he is a very happy man, whom wealth and a good fortune do not make licentious and dissolute; because these tempt men with the power and opportunity to do all the ill that their wicked hearts can design, or desire.

The temptation of riches, and the power that goes along with them, is so forcible and prevalent, that the devil, who is a sagacious spirit, and hath great and long experience in this kind, when he was making the experiment, whether Christ was a mere man, or the Son of God, reserved this for his last tempta-

SERM.  
XXXVIII.



temptation, resolving, if that would not do, to try him no farther. After he had assaulted him in several kinds, he represents to him at last that which was sufficient to have surfeited two of the most insatiable desires of human nature, *ambition and covetousness, even all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them in a moment, or point of time*; he brings all the rays of this glory to one point, that the temptation might kindle and take hold the sooner; and says to him, *all this will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me*. He supposed with great probability, that if he were but a mere man, the strongest and most resolved mind would bend and yield to so dazzling a temptation as this; but when he saw that this temptation was rejected, he found himself baffled, and gave him over; since this did not move him, he concluded now, that he was *the Son of God indeed*, and that it was in vain to tempt him any farther.

From all this it appears, that riches are so far from making men virtuous, that nothing is more dangerous to virtue, than a full condition; if men have not a great degree of grace, as well as discretion, to manage it. *Solomon* tells us, that *the prosperity of fools destroyeth them*.

And yet how do most of us court this temptation, and are forward to thrust and venture ourselves upon it? there are a great many other things, in which most men make a right judgment of themselves, and will readily acknowledge that they are altogether unfit for them. Every man will not take upon him to be a physician, or a lawyer, to prescribe medicines in dangerous cases, and to give counsel to men in knotty and difficult points about their estates; but every man thinks himself fit enough to be rich, and sufficiently qualified to manage a great estate, if he can but get it; when perhaps there are few things in the world, which men are more insufficient for, than to wield and govern a great fortune, nor wherein there is greater danger of miscarriage. It is not every



every body's talent to be wealthy and wise, rich and innocent. SERM.  
XXXVIII.

2. As for the *outward* evils of this life, such as want and contempt, bodily pains and diseases, unhappiness in friends and relations, a great estate is by no means a sufficient security or remedy to a *covetous* man against those.

(1.) As for want. And surely one would think, that if riches were good for any thing, they are a very proper remedy against this evil, and a most certain and infallible cure of it; but experience tells us quite otherwise. *Socrates* was wont to say, that, "To want nothing, is the privilege of the deity, "and proper to God alone; but to stand in need "of as few things as may be, is the privilege of a "wise and good man, and a state of happiness next "to that of God himself; because he that hath the "fewest wants is the most easily supplied, and is "next to him that is self-sufficient." Now a man of moderate desires hath infinitely fewer wants than a *covetous* man; and because his desires are moderate, a moderate estate will satisfy them: But the wants of a *covetous* mind are never to be supplied, because it hath ordered the matter so cunningly, as to want even that which it hath; such a man does not get riches to supply his wants, but is content to want that he may be rich; insomuch that he hath not the heart to use his estate for the supply of his real necessities. How many do almost starve themselves in the midst of plenty and abundance? There is no greater sign of poverty, than to be deeply in debt; now the *covetous* man lives and dies in debt to himself. Some men have been so shamefully penurious and stingy to themselves, as even to die to save charges, which yet perhaps is the most generous thing they ever did in their whole lives, in respect to the world; because by this means some body may come to the enjoyment of their estates; and that great dunghill which they have been

SERM. so long raking together, may by this means come  
 XXXVIII. to be spread abroad for the publick benefit.

So that if a *covetous* man were possessed of the wealth of both the *Indies*, all this would not free him from want. A poor man's wants may be satisfied, when he hath obtained what he wants: But the *covetous* man labours of an incurable want; because he wants that which he hath, as well as that which he hath not.

(2.) As for contempt, riches will not secure a *covetous* man against this neither; nay, so far is it from that, that he is commonly more ridiculous and despised for living poor in the midst of abundance, that if he were really so. Did I say *really* so? He is the most *really poor* of all other. For as one says well, *The rich poor man is emphatically poor.*

(3.) Neither will riches free men from bodily illness and pain. The rich are liable to as many diseases, and as sharp pains, as the poor, and they have commonly less patience to bear them than the poor; because they have not been inured to other sorts of evils. They that have been accustomed to labour, are generally best fitted to bear pain; the rich are commonly more tender and delicate, and have a quicker sense of pain, more matter, and greater quantity of humours to feed a disease, and to enflame it to a greater height.

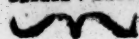
I must not here forget that there is a sort of rich men, I mean the penurious misers, who starve themselves more than the poor, and fare many times more hardly; and for this reason, though they be not in danger of the diseases that come from intemperance, and a plentiful table; yet they are liable to the diseases which proceed from starving and emptiness; which the physicians say are more dangerous than the other: So that neither the prodigal nor the niggardly rich man is secured from bodily pains and diseases, by a great estate.

(4.) Neither will riches secure a man from being unhappy in his friends and relations. A great estate will not make a man's children either more dutiful or wise, than the children of meaner persons; and if they be not so, his estate cannot be so great an happiness to him, as *they* may prove an affliction. Solomon tells us, that the very fear and apprehension of this did very much imbitter the fruit of all his labour; and he seems to speak it sensibly, and very probably with a melancholy reflection upon his son Rehoboam, Ecclef. 2. 18, 19. *Yea I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun, because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me; and who knows whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? Yet shall he have rule over all my labour, wherein I have laboured, and wherein I have shewed myself wise under the sun.* Who knows whether he shall be a wise man, or a fool? he seems to speak doubtfully: but he had a very shrewd guess what kind of man his son would make; for he speaks more despondingly in the next words, ver. 20, 21. *therefore I went about to cause my heart to despair of all the labour which I took under the sun; that is, when I thought seriously of it, I began to think that all the pains I had taken to get an estate, would be but to little purpose; for there is a man (saith he) whose labour is in wisdom, and in knowledge, and in equity (that is, who by wise and honest means hath raised a great estate) yet to a man that hath not laboured therein (that is, to a man who is endowed with none of these qualities) shall he leave it for his portion; this also is vanity, and a great evil.*

And as for friends, though the rich man have many that will call themselves so, yet he had almost as good have none; for he can hardly ever know whether they be so or not, unless he chance to fall into poverty, and then indeed the change of his condition may give him that advantage and opportunity, which otherwise he is never like to have, of discerning between his friends and his flatterers. Thus you see  
that



SERM. that riches are no security against the most considera-  
 XXXVIII. ble evils which attend us in the course of our lives.



II. When we come to die, nothing will minister less comfort to us, at that time, than a great estate. It is then a very small pleasure to a man, to reflect how much he hath gotten in the world, when he sees that he must leave it; nay, like the young man in the Gospel, *he goes away* so much the more *sorrowful, because he hath great possessions*. All the things of this world seem very inconsiderable to a man, when he approaches to the confines of the other: for when he sees that he must leave this world, then he would fain make a virtue of necessity, and begins to change his apprehensions of these things, and to have very slight and mean thoughts of them, when he is convinced he can enjoy them no longer. What the philosopher was wont to say of the pleasures of this world, is as true of riches, and all the other enjoyments of it; That, “if they did but put on the same countenance and look with the same face, when they come to us, that they will do when they turn from us, and take their leave of us, we should hardly entertain them.”

Now if a man have placed his chief happiness in this world, as the *covetous* man does in his riches, his great trouble when he comes to die, will be, that he must leave them. Nothing could be more severely said to the *covetous* man, than that which God says to the *rich man* in the parable; *Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee, and then whose shall these things be?* For of all things in the world, such men cannot endure to think of parting with these things, or that what they have got with such great care and labour, should come to the possession of another.

And therefore when we are so hot and eager in the pursuit of these things, we should do well to consider, *how they will appear to us in a dying hour*. And this consideration well imprinted upon our minds, will

will make us very careful, to treasure up other kind of comforts to ourselves against such a time, and to labour after those things which we shall never grow out of conceit withal, but shall value them to the last, and then most of all when we come to die, and leave this world. For as a Poet of our own says excellently,

SERM.  
XXXVIII.

*'Tis not that which first we love :  
But what dying we approve.*

Thus I have done with the *fourth* thing, whereby the evil and unreasonableness of *covetousness* doth appear ; namely, that the happiness of human life doth not consist in a great estate ; *the life of man doth not consist in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.* The great ends of *religion*, and *covetousness*, are very different. The great end which *religion* proposeth to itself, is *happiness* : but the great end which *covetousness* proposeth, is *riches* ; which are neither necessary nor a probable means of *happiness*. I should now have proceeded to the *fifth* and *last* particular ; namely, that riches are so far from being the happiness of human life, that they usually contribute very much to our misery and sorrow ; as will appear, if we consider these *four* things.

*First*, The labour and care which *covetous* men are at in the getting of a great estate.

*Secondly*, The anxiety of keeping it, together with the fears of losing it.

*Thirdly*, The trouble and vexation of losing it ; and,

*Fourthly*, The dreadful and heavy account which every man must give of a great estate. But these particulars, together with the *application* of this whole discourse, I shall refer to another opportunity.

The fourth  
Sermon on  
this Text.

# SERMON XXXIX.

## The Evil and Unreasonableness of Covetousness.

✕ LUKE xii. 15.

*And he said unto them, take heed and beware of Covetousness; for a Man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*

SERM.  
XXXIX  
~

**I**N my two last discourses on this subject, I have represented the evil and unreasonableness of the vice of *covetousness* in *four* particulars. I proceed now to the *fifth* and last particular, whereby I told you the evil and unreasonableness of it would appear, *viz.*

That riches are so far from being the happiness of human life, that they usually contribute very much to our misery and sorrow; as will evidently appear, if we consider these *four* things:

*First*, The labour and care which the *covetous* man is at in getting of a great estate.

*Secondly*, The anxiety of keeping it, together with the fears of losing it.

*Thirdly*, The trouble and vexation of having lost it.

*Fourthly*, The heavy and dreadful account which every man must give of a great estate.

*First*, The labour and care which the *covetous* man hath in getting a great estate. He that will be rich, must sweat for it, and refuse no pains and trouble; he must *rise up early, and lye down late, and eat the bread of carefulness.* A slave that digs in the mines,



mines, or rowes in the gallies, is not a greater drudge, SERM.  
than some *covetous* worldings are; only with this XXXIX  
difference, that the *covetous* man thinks that he la-  
bours and takes all these pains for himself; whereas  
the slave understands the matter more truly, and  
thinks that he does it for another.

But besides the pains he takes, he is full of care and anxiety. How is he, through the greedy desire of *having*, racked between the hopes of getting, and the fear of missing what he seeks? The Apostle observes what tormenting cares accompany this vice: 1 Tim. 6. 10. *The love of money (saith he) is the root of all evil; not only of the evil of sin, but of the evil likewise of trouble and disquiet. For it follows, which while some coveted after, they have pierced themselves through with many sorrows: variety of troubles attend them that will be rich.*

Secondly, If we consider the anxiety of keeping what they have got, together with the fear of losing it again, this is another great part of a *covetous* man's infelicity. The rich man here in the parable after the *text*, when he saw his estate coming upon him so fast, cries out, *what shall I do?* Poor man! who would not pity his condition, to see him put to this difficulty and distress, and to hear him make as heavy a moan as the poorest man could do! Now that he hath a plentiful harvest, and his crop hath answered, if it were possible, his *covetous* desire, he is in a great deal of perplexity, and almost at his wits end how to dispose of it; he was horribly afraid lest any of it should be lost for want of a secure place to store it up in; *What shall I do, because I have no room, where to bestow my fruits?* Where was the difficulty of this? Why, he was loth to lose his fruits, and he was loth to lay out money to secure them. But upon farther consideration, he resolves *of the two evils to chuse the least*; and he said, *this will I do, I will pull down my barns, and build greater, and there will I bestow all my fruits, and my goods.* But why

SERM. could he not let the barns he had stand, and build  
 XXXIX more? No, that he did not think so well, he loved  
 to see all his good things at one view, and what a  
 goodly show they would make together. Besides  
 that, it is the humour of *covetousness*, when it breaks  
 out into expence, to over-do; the *miser's* buildings  
 are like his *feasts*, always extravagant. The *cove-*  
*tous* man (as to the business of expence) is like a cow-  
 ard as to fighting, he declines it as long as he can;  
 but when he is pushed to the last necessity, he grows  
 desperate and lays about him.

*Tantis parta malis, curâ majore metuque  
 Servantur; misera est magni custodia census.*

*Riches which are got with so much trouble, are not  
 kept without greater fear and care. A covetous man is  
 in nothing more miserable, than in the anxiety and care  
 of disposing and securing what he hath got. When a  
 man's desires are endless, his cares and fears will be  
 so too.*

*Thirdly, As great an evil as any of the former, is  
 the vexation of having lost these things. If by any  
 accident the man happens to be deprived of them,  
 then he takes on heavily, hangs down his head and  
 mourns, as a man would do for his first-born; and is  
 ready to cry out with Micah, they have taken away  
 my Gods, and what have I more? Upon every little  
 loss the covetous man is undone, though he have a  
 hundred times more left than he knows what to do  
 withal. So deeply are the hearts of earthly-minded  
 men many times pierced with earthly losses, as with  
 Rachel to refuse to be comforted. Nay, St. Paul ob-  
 serves, that the sorrow of the world sometimes worketh  
 death, 1 Cor. 7. 10.*

*Fourthly, But the saddest consideration of all is,  
 that heavy and dreadful account that must one day  
 be given, both of the getting and using of a great  
 estate. They that have got an estate by fraud and  
 falshood,*

falshood, or by oppression and grinding the face of the poor, may read their doom at large, James 5. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. Go to now ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you; your riches are corrupted, and your garments moth-eaten; your gold and silver are cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire: ye have heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold the hire of the labourers which have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth, and the cries of them which have reaped, are entred into the ears of the Lord of Sabbaoth; ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton, ye have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter.

SERM.  
XXXIX

And we must be accountable likewise for the using of our estates. God gives them to us in trust, and the greater they are, the more we are to account for; so much as we need is *ours*, but beyond what will support us, and be a convenient provision for our families, in the rank God hath placed them; all that is given to us, that we may give it to *others*; and indeed it is not *ours*; we are the *proprietors* of it in respect of men, but in respect of God we are but *trustees*, and *stewards*, and God will require an account of us how we have disposed of it.

And can there be a more reigning madness among men, than to take care only to increase their account more and more, by receiving much; whereas our great care and concernment should be to clear our account, by laying out what we receive, according to the trust reposed in us? How much we shall receive of the things of this world, is in the care and will of our master; but our care and fidelity are seen in laying it out as we ought. Among men (says one) it is well enough if a steward can give an account of so much laid out, and so much in cash, and upon this he shall have his discharge: But we cannot this way clear our account with God; for it is not offering him *his own again* that will satisfy him, as we



SERM. may learn from the parable of the *talents*. So that  
 XXXIX upon the whole matter, we should be so far from en-  
 vying the rich, that we should rather envy the safe-  
 ty and happiness of those who are not intrusted with  
 such dangerous blessings, and who are free from the  
 temptations of a plentiful fortune, and the curse of  
 a *covetous* mind, and from the heavy account of a  
 great estate.

I come now, in the last place, to make some *ap-  
 plication* of this discourse to ourselves.

I. Let our Saviour's *caution* take place with us,  
 let these words of his sink into our minds, *take heed  
 and beware of covetousness*. Our Saviour, I told you,  
 doubles the *caution*, that we may double our *care*.  
 It is a sin very apt to steal upon us, and slyly to infi-  
 nuate itself into us under the spacious pretence of in-  
 dustry in our callings, and a provident care of our  
 families; But however it may be coloured over, it  
 is a great evil, dangerous to ourselves, and mischie-  
 vious to the world. Now to kill this vice in us, be-  
 sides the considerations before-mentioned taken from  
 the *evil* and *unreasonableness* of it, I will urge these  
*three* more :

1. That the things of this world are uncertain.
  2. That our lives are as uncertain as these things:
- And,
3. That there is another life after this.

1. The uncertainty of the things of this world.  
 This should very much cool our affections toward  
 them, that after all our care and diligence for the  
 obtaining of them, we are not sure to enjoy them;  
 we may be deprived of them by a thousand acci-  
 dents. This consideration *Solomon* urgeth, to take  
 men off from an over-eager pursuit of these things,  
*Prov. 23. 5. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which  
 is not? riches certainly make to themselves wings, they  
 fly away as an eagle towards heaven.* After we have  
 sat brooding over an estate many years, it may all  
 on a sudden, before we are aware, take wing, and  
 fly

fly away, like an eagle towards heaven, soaring suddenly out of our sight, and never to return again. SERM. XXXIX

And the same argument St. Paul useth, to take off mens affections from the world, 1 Cor. 7. 31. because *the fashion of this world passeth away*; παράγει τὸ σχῆμα τοῦ κόσμου τούτου. He compares the things of this world to a *scene*, which is presently changed, and vanisheth almost as soon as it appears. Now seeing these things are so uncertain, we should take heed how we fix our hearts too much upon them; we should not make love to any thing that is so fickle and inconstant as this world is. We should be afraid to contract too near and intimate a friendship with any thing which will forsake us, after we have courted it with so much importunity, and purchased it with so much pains, and endeavoured to secure it with so much caution and tenderness.

2. Our lives are as uncertain as these things. If our estates remain with us, we are continually in danger of being removed from them. And (as one says) it is folly to build our hopes upon a match, where both parties are so uncertain and inconstant. Why should we place our dearest affections upon things which we are not sure to enjoy one moment? *Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be taken from thee, and then whose shall these things be?* I remember Seneca tells us a real story, just answerable to the *rich man* in the parable, of an acquaintance of his, who by long and great industry had arrived to a vast estate; and just when he began to enjoy it, after one of the first good meals which perhaps he ever made in his life, that very night *his soul was taken from him*, for presently after supper he died. *In ipso actu bene sedentium rerum, in ipso procurrentis fortunæ impetu. In the height of his prosperity, and in the full career of his good fortune.*

But if we live to enjoy for any time what we have got, we should remember that our life is but a passage through the world, that we are but *pilgrims and*

SERM. *strangers in the world, as all our fathers were, that we*  
 XXXIX *have here no abiding-place, no continuing city, but are*  
 travelling towards our own country. And why should we load ourselves whilst we are upon our journey, and cumber ourselves with those things which will be of no use to us there, where we are going.

But the great wonder of all is, that this vice should so strongly reign, and even grow upon men in old age, and get strength, as weakness creeps upon us. This very thought *that we are to die*, should work in us a great indifferency towards the things of this world. But when men are convinced they cannot live long, and that every step they take, they are in danger of stumbling into the grave, this one would think should wean our affections from this world; and yet usually none take so fast hold of it, and embrace it so kindly, as old men; like friends, who though they know they must leave one another, yet are loth to part. Do we not see many pursue these things with as much eagerness and appetite, when they are leaving the world, as if they were to stay in it an hundred years longer? so that in this sense also, they are *children again*, and are as fond of these toys, as if they were just beginning the world, and setting out for their whole life.

3. There is another life after this, to be seriously thought on, and provided for with great care: and did men firmly believe this, they would not with *Martha*, busy themselves about many things, but would mind the one thing necessary, and with *Mary* chuse that better part, which could not be taken from them. They would overlook the trifles of this world, and scarce take notice of the things which are seen, but be only intent upon the things which are not seen; because the things which are seen are but temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. The great concernments of another world would employ their utmost care and their best thoughts.

Whilst



Whilst we are in this world, we should remember **SERM.** that *this is not our home, nor the place of our rest*; and **XXXIX** therefore as men do in an inn, we should make a shift with those indifferent accommodations which the world will afford us, and which we can have upon easy terms, without too much trouble and stir, because we are not to continue long here; and in the mean time we should cheer up our selves with the thoughts of the pleasure and the plenty of *our father's house*, and of that full contentment and satisfaction which we shall meet withal, when we come to those *everlasting habitations*.

So that our great care should be to provide for eternity. If we have unbounded desires, let us place them upon such objects as are worthy of them. Let us *earnestly covet the best things*, and seek after *the true riches*. We should so mind the world, as to make heaven our great care; as to make sure to *provide our selves bags that wax not old; a treasure in the heavens, that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth*, as our saviour adviseth, *Luke 12. 33.* To the same purpose is the counsel of St. Paul, *1 Tim. 6. 17, 18, 19. Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be rich in good works, willing to distribute, ready to communicate, laying up for themselves a good foundation* (or as the word *θεμελιος*, may also be rendered, *a good treasure*) *against the time which is to come, that they may lay hold of eternal life.*

I have told you that all these things will fail in a short space; we shall either be stripp'd of them, or separated from them when we come to die, and shall look over to that vast eternity which we must shortly enter upon; this world, and all the enjoyments of it, will then be as nothing to us, and we shall be wholly taken up with the thoughts of another world, and be heartily sorry that the things of this world have taken up so much of our time and care, and that

SERM. that the great and weighty concernments of all eternity have been so little minded and regarded by us. **XXXIX** Now seeing all these things shall be, pardon me, if I earnestly beg of you in the midst of all your worldly cares, to have some consideration for your immortal souls, which are in no wise provided for by a great estate, but are designed for nobler enjoyments than this world can afford. When you are taking care to feed and cloath these dying bodies, remember that better part of your selves which is to live for ever. Let not all your enquiry be, *what shall I eat? or what shall I drink? or wherewithall shall I be cloathed?* But sometimes ask your selves this question, *what shall I do to be saved?* I have an immortal spirit, it is but fit some care should be taken of that, to train it up to eternity, and to make it *fit to be made partaker of an inheritance among them that are sanctified.*

The firm belief and serious consideration of the great things of another world cannot surely but cool the heat of our affections towards these dying and perishing things, and make us resolved not to do any thing whereby we may violate the peace of our consciences, or forfeit our interest and happiness in another world.

II. By way of remedy against this vice of *covetousness*, it is good for men to be contented with their condition. This the Apostle prescribes as the best cure of this vices, *Heb. 13. 5. Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have;* ἀρχοίμενοι τοῖς παροῦσιν, being contented with the present, and thinking that sufficient. A *covetous* man cannot enjoy the present, for fear of the future; either out of fear that he shall come to want, or out of a sickness and uneasiness of mind, which makes that nothing pleaseth him: but if we could bring our minds to our condition, and be contented with what we have, we should not be so eager and impatient after more.

This

This contentedness with our present condition doth SERM. not hinder, but that men by providence, and indu- XXXIX stry, and lawful endeavours, may lay the foundation of a more plentiful fortune than they have at present. For provided a man use no indirect and dishonest ways to increase his estate, and do not torment himself with anxious cares, do neither make himself guilty, nor miserable, that he may be rich; provided he do not neglect better things, to attain these, and have not an insatiable appetite towards them; provided he do not idolize his estate, and set his heart upon these things; and if he can find in his heart to enjoy them himself, and to be charitable to others; nothing hinders but that he may be contented with his present condition, and yet take all fair opportunities which the providence of God puts into his hands of enlarging his fortune. It is a good character which the poet gives of *Aristippus*.

*Omnis Aristippum decuit color, & status, & res;  
Tentantem majora, ferè presentibus æquum.*

“ Every state and condition became him; for though  
“ he endeavoured after more, yet his mind was al-  
“ way in a manner equal to his present condition.

But if a man be discontented with the present, and restless because he hath no more, the whole world will not not satisfy him; and if God should raise him from one step to another, he would never think his fortune high enough, and in every degree of it would be as little contented as he was at first. Our Saviour represents this sort of men by the *rich man* here in the parable, who when his barns were full and ready to crack, his mind was not filled; therefore he pulls them down and builds greater; and if he had lived till these had been full, they must have gone down too, and he would still have built greater. So that though he designed when he had raised his estate to such a pitch, to have set down, and taken  
his



SERM. his ease, yet his *coverous* humour would have been  
 XXXIX stirring again, and still have stept in between him  
 and contentment, and for ever have hindred him  
 from arriving at it.

III. by way of direction, I would persuade those who are rich, to be charitable with what they have. If God hath blessed us with abundance, and we would not be like this *rich man* here in the parable, we must lay out of our estates, in ways of piety and charity, for the publick good, and for the private relief of those who are in want; for that is the *anabotic*, or moral of the parable; *so is he that layeth up treasures for himself, and is not rich towards God.* So shall he be; such an issue of his folly may every one expect (to be taken away from his estate before he comes to enjoy it) *who layeth up treasures for himself, but is not rich towards God*; but does not lay up riches with God. How is that? By works of mercy, and charity. This our Saviour calls *laying up for our selves treasure in heaven*; Matt. 16. 20. And at the 33d verse of this chapter, he calls giving of alms, *providing for our selves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens which faileth not*: they who do thus, who are rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, are said to *lay up for themselves a good treasure against the time which is to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life*, 1 Tim. 6. 18. 19. *Extra fortunam est quicquid donatur*; “ what-  
 “ soever we give to the poor is safely disposed, and  
 “ put out of the reach of fortune, because it is laid  
 “ up in heaven, where we may expect the return  
 “ and recompence of it.” Charity to our poor brethren is a certain way of transmitting our riches into the other world for our reception there. So our Lord tells us, Luke 16. 9. *I say unto you, make to your selves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye shall fail* (that is, when you shall leave this world, and the enjoyments of it) *they may receive you into everlasting habitations.*

At

At the great day of judgment, when we shall appear before God, and according to our Saviour's representation of the proceedings of that day, shall hear him thus exhorting with men, *I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat; thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not*; what would we then give, how much of our estates, if we had them then at our command, would we not be willing to part withal, to have that comfortable sentence past upon us; *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, before the foundation of the world!* But if we be found among those who would spare nothing out of their abundance to any charitable use and purpose, I have not the heart to tell you how miserable the condition of such persons will be, and how dreadful a doom will be passed upon them.

It is a sad consideration, that there are some persons in the world, who seem to be only defective in this duty; like the young man in the Gospel, who lacked but *this one thing* to make him perfect; *he had kept the commandments from his youth*, and preserved himself from those gross sins which the law did plainly forbid; and yet for want of *this one thing* he parted from his Saviour, and, for any thing we know, fell short of eternal life. There are many who are very devout and religious, much in prayer and fasting, and all the other frugal exercises of piety, which cost them no money; but yet are very defective in alms and charity, which in scripture are so frequently joined with the fastings and prayers of good men; and by this means, all their devotion and diligence in the other parts of religion is lost, and will not bring them to heaven. And is it not great pity, that they who are not far from the kingdom of God, should fall short of it? that they who in most other things bid so fair for heaven, should break with God upon this single point?

I know

SERM. I know men have several ways to deceive their  
 XXXIX own hearts, and to defend themselves against all  
 these assaults.

*First*, They say, they are injurious to no man, in not being charitable. And 'tis true, that in human courts the poor can have no action against the rich for want of charity to them; But yet for all that, they do injuriously detain that which doth not of right belong to them. They are cruel and hard-hearted, and they are guilty of a high breach of trust, in respect of God, whose stewards they are, and who hath dealt so liberally with them in the things of this life, on purpose to oblige them to be so to others. That which thou storest up, without regard to the necessities of others, is unlawfully detained by thee, since God intended it should have been *for bread to the hungry, and cloaths to the naked*, and for help and relief *of those who are ready to perish*. For why art thou rich, and another poor; but that thou mightest exercise thy charity upon those fitting objects which the providence of God presents to thee? It had been easy for God (since *the earth is his, and the fullness thereof*) so to have contrived things, that every man should have had a sufficiency, and have been in a moderate condition; but then a great many virtues would have been shut out of the world, and lost, for want of opportunity to exercise them. Where then had been the poor man's patience, and the rich man's pity, and the contentedness of men of moderate fortune?

*Secondly*, Men say that they have children to provide for. And do so in god's name, for he allows us to do it liberally; but unless their condition and wealth set them above an ordinary calling, do not chuse so to provide for them, as to take them off from all employment, lest you put them in the ready way to be undone; have a care of leaving them no other business, but to spend what you have left them;  
 if



if you do so, they will in all probability do that SERM.  
work very effectually, and make as much haste to XXXIX  
be poor, as you did to make them rich. If men  
could be but contented to do that which is best for  
their children, they might do a great deal better for  
themselves, by disposing what they have to spare in  
charity.

*Thirdly*, Others would fain excuse themselves from  
this duty at present by telling what they intend to  
do when they come to die, that is, when they can  
keep what they have no longer. It seems then thou  
wilt leave it to thy executor to do good in thy  
stead. This shews thou hast no great heart to the  
business, when thou deferrest it as long as ever thou  
canst. But why wilt thou trust another with the  
disposal of thy charity, rather than thy self? This  
is hardly to offer either a *reasonable*, or a *living sa-*  
*crifice to God*, to do good only when we are dead.  
It is well that God hath made all men mortal, and  
that *it is appointed for all men once to die*; otherwise  
some men would never do good at all.

Wherefore setting aside these, and all other ex-  
cuses, which will not be admitted, nor will any of  
us have the face to plead them at the day of judg-  
ment; I say, setting aside all excuses whatsoever, let  
us resolve to do good with what we have whilst we  
can; and to that end let us lay aside some portion  
of what God hath blest us withal, for the uses of  
piety, and charity, and let it bear some decent pro-  
portion to what God hath given us.

There is never want of proper objects for our lar-  
gest charity, and now less than ever. Besides these  
at home, which present themselves to us in great  
numbers every day, God hath sent us many from  
abroad, who call loud upon us for our pity and help,  
both as they are reduced to the greatest extremity,  
and are sufferers in the best cause, that of our com-  
mon religion, which ought now to be dearer to us  
than ever. Let us shew mercy now, as we expect  
mercy

mercy from others, in any day of our distress in this world, and as ever we hope, whenever we come to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, *to find mercy with the Lord in that day.*

Consider what I have said upon this argument, and let this extraordinary kind of caution, which our Saviour here gives, make a deep impression upon your minds; *Take heed and beware of covetousness; for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*

## S E R M O N XL.

Religion, our first and great Concernment.

MATT. vi. 33.

*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

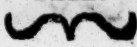
SERM.  
XL.

**I**N the latter part of this chapter, our Saviour doth in a long discourse caution his disciples against an inordinate care about the things of this life, which he concludes with a strict charge to make religion their first and great concernment, and above all things to take care to secure to themselves the happiness of another life; *But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, &c.* In the handling of which words, I shall do these four things.

*First*, I shall explain what is here meant by the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

*Secondly*, What by seeking of these.

*Thirdly*,

Thirdly, I shall lay down some necessary and plain SERM. directions, which if we observe, we cannot miscarry XL. in this matter. 

Fourthly, I shall set before you some of the most proper and powerful motives and encouragements to the minding of this great interest and concernment; among which, I shall particularly consider the argument or encouragement here used in the text, *and all these things shall be added unto you.*

First, I shall explain to you what is here meant by *the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.*

I. What is meant by *the kingdom of God.* And there are two famous acceptations of this phrase, and both of them very frequent in the New Testament. Sometimes it is used to signify the state of the Gospel, or the christian religion, which by the Jews was called *the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of the Messias*, Mark 1. 15. *The kingdom of God is at hand*; that is, the state or dispensation of the Gospel is now approaching, and ready to take place. Luke 17. 20. the Pharisees demanding of our Saviour, *when the kingdom of God should come*, that is, when the reign of the Messias should commence; he answers them, *the kingdom of God cometh not with observation*; that is, not with any temporal pomp and splendor, so as to draw the eyes of people after it, as the Jews did vainly imagine; but *the kingdom of God*, *ἐν τῷ ᾧ ἐστέ*, *is among you*; not *within you* as our translation hath improperly render'd it; *the kingdom of God* (he tells them) *is already come unto you*, the Messias is among you, and ye are not aware of him. In the like sense this phrase is used, Matt. 21. 43. *The kingdom of God* (that is, the Gospel) *shall be taken from you, and given to a Nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.* And so likewise the phrase of *the kingdom of heaven* is used, Matt. 11. 11. where, speaking of John the baptist, our Saviour saith, *that among them that were born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the baptist*; that is, there was no greater



SERM. person than he, under the *Jewish* dispensation, and  
 XL. yet be that is least in the kingdom of heaven, that is,  
 under the dispensation of the Gospel, is greater than  
 be.

Now though this sense of *the kingdom of God* be not wholly excluded in the text, yet there is another sense of this phrase very usual likewise in the scripture, and which is more agreeable to the scope of our Saviour's argument and discourse, and so it signifies that future state of happiness and glory which good men shall be advanced to in another world, in opposition to this life, and the enjoyments of it, which our Saviour had before forbidden his disciples to be so solicitous about. *Take ye no thought, saying, what shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be cloathed?* And then it follows in direct opposition to this inordinate and solicitous care about worldly things, *but seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.* That is, be not so solicitous about the conveniencies and necessaries of this life, as about the happiness of the other, and the means to it. And this sense of this phrase of *the kingdom of God* is so very frequent in the New Testament, that I shall not need to give particular instances of it.

II. What is meant by righteousness; *seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.* Righteousness, in the strictest and most proper sense of the word, signifies the particular virtue of justice; and very frequently in the Old Testament it is used for charity to the poor, or almsgiving, *Psal. 37. 25, 26. I have been young, and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread; he is ever merciful, and lendeth; and, Psal. 112. 9. he hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor, his righteousness endureth for ever.* But righteousness in its largest and most extended sense, comprehends all the virtues of a good man; and so it signifies here in the text, and in many other places of scripture.

So that *the kingdom of God, and his righteousness*, SERM. XL. comprehends the whole business of religion, our *last end*, which is *eternal life and happiness* in another world; and *the way and means* to this end; which is *righteousness*, or that universal goodness which God requires of us, and whereof he himself is a pattern and example to us; for which reason it is called *his righteousness*. And in this sense of our *last end*, and *the way and means* to it, *the kingdom of heaven, and righteousness*, are used in another place, even of this Sermon of our Saviour's upon the mount, *Matth. 5. 20. Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven*; where *righteousness* is made the necessary means and condition of eternal life. I proceed in the

Second place, to explain what is meant by *seeking first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness*. And this signifies the greatest intention of mind, and earnestness of endeavour about the business of religion, in order to our attaining of eternal happiness; such a seriousness and earnestness of endeavour as earthly-minded men use about the things of this world. *For after all these things* (says our Saviour immediately after the text) *do the Gentiles seek*; τὰ ἔθνη ἐπιζητοῦσι, which words signify an intense care, and vigorous endeavour; *but seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness*; that is, be ye, who profess yourselves Christians, as intent upon the business of religion, and the salvation of your souls, as the heathen, who are in a great measure ignorant of God and another life, are about the things of this life.

And here are two things to be explained.

I. What is here meant by *seeking the kingdom of God, and his righteousness*; and,

II. What by *seeking them in the first place*.

For the *first*: A sincere and earnest seeking of the *kingdom of God, and his righteousness*, does imply in it these four things.

SERM.

I. A fixed design and resolution as to the end;

XL. that we do not only propound to ourselves the eternal happiness and salvation of our souls as our chief end, but that we be immoveably fixed upon it, and always have it in our aim and design; that here we set up our resolution, if it be possible, to be happy for ever; that we have this end always in our eye, and be firmly resolved to do all that we can towards attaining it.

Not that we are obliged always actually to think upon it; but to have it frequently in our minds, and habitually to intend and design it, so as to make it the scope of all our endeavours and actions, and that every thing we do be either directly and immediately in order to it, or some way or other subservient to this design, or however not inconsistent with it; like the term and end of a man's journey, towards which the traveller is continually tending, and hath it always habitually in his intention, though he doth not always think of it every step that he takes, and though he be not always directly advancing and moving towards it, yet he never knowingly goes out of the way. And though he bait and lodge by the way, and does many other things which do not directly set him forward, yet they are all subservient to his journey, or in prosecution of it; or at least no wilful deviations from it. Thus it should be with us, while we are sojourning in this world; our fixed aim and design should be to get to heaven, and thither we should be continually tending in our desires and endeavours.

And if this resolution be deeply rooted and fixed in our minds, it will govern all our actions, and keep them steddy to their main end. Whereas, if we be uncertain and unresolved upon our great end, and be divided between the happiness of the next life, and the present enjoyments of this, we shall be fickle and unsteddy in all our motions. He that hath two ends, can pursue neither vigorously, but while he is moving



moving towards the one, he leans and inclines to the other ; and like a needle between two loadstones, is always in a doubtful and trembling condition ; inclines to both, but is constant to neither : And this is the meaning of that aphorism of St. James, *the double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.* He that is unresolved as to his main end, hath two minds, and can prosecute nothing vigorously : But if our mind be once fixed and resolved, that will determine and govern all our motions, and inspire us with diligence, and zeal, and perseverance in the prosecution of our end. SERM. XL.

2. *Seeking the kingdom of God, and his righteousness,* implies incessant care and diligence as to the means ; that we make religion our business, and exercise ourselves in the duties of it, both in publick and private, at proper times and seasons, with the same seriousness and application of mind, as men do in their callings and professions, for the gaining of wealth and preferment ; especially on the *Lord's day*, which God hath taken to himself, and set apart for the duties of his worship and service. Not that we are excused from minding religion at other times ; but that those who are pressed and streightened by the necessary cares of this life, may be sure to mind it then, and may have no colour of excuse for the neglect of it at that time, which God hath allotted for that very purpose, and which it is unlawful to employ about our worldly affairs. God expects that we should serve him at other times, that we should live in an habitual sense of him, and (as Solomon expresseth it, *Prov. 23. 17.*) *Be in the fear of the Lord all the day long* ; so as to be careful not to offend or transgress in any thing, and so as to redeem all opportunities for the exercise of piety, and devotion ; but *this day* he peremptorily challengeth to himself, and expects we should employ it in his service, and dedicate it to religion, to the contemplation of God and heavenly things, and the care of our immortal souls,

SERM. souls, with the same seriousness and diligence, as we  
 XL. do upon other days *labour for the bread which perisheth*; and the less leisure we have upon other days for this purpose, the more entirely should we devote and consecrate *this day* to the purposes and duties of religion.

Not but that our whole life, and all the actions of it, should be under the government of religion, and directed by the laws and rules of it; and it should be our continual care and endeavour to please God in all things, and we should take as much pains, and be as heartily concerned to be good men, as men of the world are to grow rich and great in this world; nay so much more, by how much it is a better and nobler design to improve in grace and virtue, than to prosper and thrive in our temporal estate; and we do not in good earnest *seek the kingdom of God, and his righteousness*, if this be not our great study and endeavour, to subdue our lusts, and govern our passions, and in a word, to reform whatever is amiss in the inward frame and temper of our minds, and in our outward conversation. And indeed nothing does require greater diligence, and attention, and care, than for a man to become truly and thoroughly good, to be meek, and humble, and patient, and contented, and resigned to the will of God in every condition; to be peaceable, and charitable, and placable, and ready to forgive; these are great and difficult things, and whatever we think, not the work of a wish, or the effect of a sudden resolution before the receiving of the holy sacrament, no, nor the fruit of frequent and fervent prayers, without the hearty concurrence of our own care and endeavour, to render our lives such, as we pray God by his grace to assist and enable us to be.

3. *Seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness*, does further imply zeal and earnestness in the pursuit of this design: And this is a degree above diligence; for zeal is an ardour and fervency of mind in the prosecution

prosecution of a thing for which you are greatly con-SERM.  
cerned, and which we vehemently desire to obtain ; XL.  
it is the hottest and most intense degree of our af-  
fection towards any thing, of our desire and love,  
mixed with anger at every thing that stands in our  
way and hinders us from obtaining what we seek af-  
ter ; such an heat as ambition does commonly inspire  
men withal, in the pursuit of power and preferment.  
Such ought to be the temper of our minds, and the  
edge of our spirits, in *seeking the kingdom of God*, as  
does usually possess men in seeking the kingdoms of  
this world, and the glory of them. We must re-  
member that it is *a kingdom* which we seek for, and  
aspire after ; not like the unstable and tottering  
kingdoms of the world, but *a kingdom which cannot  
be shaken*, as the Apostle calls it.

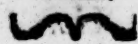
So that the greatness of the design, and the excel-  
lency of what we seek after, will justify and warrant  
the highest degree of a discreet zeal and fervour in  
the prosecution of it ; and therefore no wonder that  
the scripture in this matter useth words that import  
the greatest vehemency and earnestness, bidding us  
*to strive to enter in at the strait gate, to labour, and  
watch, to run, and wrestle, and fight*, and, in a word,  
*to give all diligence, to make our calling and election  
sure*.

Lastly, *Seeking the kingdom of God, and his right-  
eousness*, does imply patience and perseverance in our  
endeavours after them, and that we never cease our  
pursuit of them, 'till we have obtained them ; and  
this, notwithstanding all the difficulties and discour-  
agements, the opposition and persecution that we  
meet with *for righteousness sake* : For this we must ex-  
pect and reckon upon before hand, to encounter ma-  
ny difficulties, and find many discouragements in  
the ways of religion ; for *strait is the gate, and nar-  
row is the way that leads to life*, as our Lord himself  
hath told us : nay, we must count to be grievously  
*persecuted for righteousness sake*, and, if God see it



SERM.

XL.



good for us, *to pass through many tribulations*, before we shall enter *into the kingdom of God*; and therefore we had need to be armed with a great deal of patience, and a very firm and obstinate resolution, to enable us to bear up, and to hold out against all these; for this is a necessary qualification for our *seeking the kingdom of God, and his righteousness*. So our Lord hath told us, *Matth. 10. 22. he that endureth to the end, shall be saved*; if we hope to receive the crown of life, we must be faithful to the death, *Rev. 2. 10*. And to the same purpose St. Paul declares, *Rom. 2. 7. that they only shall be made partakers of eternal life, who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality*.

You see what is meant by *seeking the kingdom of God, and his righteousness*; it remains briefly to be shewn, in the second place, what is meant by *seeking these first*; seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; that is, let this be your main and principal design, so as to take place of all others in your esteem and affections, in your aim and endeavour; in comparison of this, mind nothing else, not the comforts and conveniencies, not the necessities of life, *what ye shall eat, and what ye shall drink, and wherewithal ye shall be clothed*. These you see our Saviour instanceth in before the text, as not to be regarded and taken care of, when they come in competition with *the kingdom of God, and his righteousness*. And our Saviour tells us elsewhere, that not only none of the comforts and necessities of life are to be valued against him, and his religion, but that even his temporal life itself, as dear as it is to us, is to be parted withal, and given up, rather than to quit the profession of his truth and religion, *Matth. 10. 37, 38. He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me*. He instanceth in the nearest relations, those towards whom we have the most tender and relenting affections,

and

and yet he tells us, that the consideration of his truth, and religion ought to take place of these, nay, even of life itself; for so it follows, and *he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.* St. Luke expresseth it more strongly and vehemently, *Luke 14. 26. If any man come to me (that is take upon him the profession of my religion) and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.* When these come in competition with our religion, and the great interest of our eternal salvation, we are to regard and value them no more than if they were the objects of our hatred, but to set aside all consideration of affection to them, so far as it would tempt us from constancy in our religion, and the care of our souls.

So that when our Saviour bids us *first to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness*, his meaning is, that religion, and the concernments of our souls, and the eternal happiness of them in another world, should be our first and chief care; and that all other things should be made subordinate and subservient to this great design, and to be no farther minded by us, than they really are so: For that which is our great end, will subdue all other things, and bring them into subjection to it, and will reject them, and throw them aside, if they be inconsistent with it. If heaven be our utmost aim, and in order to that, it be our great study and endeavour to be righteous and holy, this resolution and design, sincerely entertained, will over-rule all other considerations, and make all the things of this world to stoop and give way to that which is our chief end, the eternal happiness and salvation of our souls. And thus I have done with the *second* thing I proposed, namely, what is meant by *seeking the kingdom of God and his righteousness*; and what by *seeking them first*.

I proceed in the *third* place, to lay down some plain rules for our direction and furtherance in seeking  
the

SERM. *the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; that is, in*  
 XL. *the great business of religion.*

 *First*, Let us always live under a lively and powerful sense of another world; that we are placed here in this world, but for a little while, and *that* wholly in order to our preparation for a better and happier life. Let this thought be often in your minds: That eternity is the most considerable duration, and the next world the place of our everlasting abode, where we must dwell and continue for ever; and therefore our present state is but of little moment and consideration to us, but only in order to our future and everlasting condition. We may please ourselves here for a little while with toys and trifles, with dreams and shadows of pleasure and happiness, and may be exercised with some troubles and afflictions for a short space, *for a moment* (as the Apostle calls it) *our light afflictions which are but for a moment*, and so indeed it is, compared with all eternity; but the substantial and durable happiness or misery remain for men in the other world, and will certainly be their portion, according as they have demeaned themselves in this world.

Now the serious consideration of this cannot fail to put us upon vigorous preparations for another world, and to make us wholly intent upon our eternal concerns, and to resolve whatever becomes of us in this world, to take effectual care that we may be happy for ever. He that firmly believes the immortality of the soul, and a life after death, which will never have an end, must needs take into consideration his whole duration, and bend all his care and thoughts, how he may avoid the greatest and most lasting misery, and secure to himself an immortality of bliss and happiness.

*Secondly*, Let us always be under a conviction of the absolute and indispensable necessity of holiness and righteousness, as the only way and means whereby the kingdom of God is to be attained, and that holiness  
 and



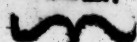
and happiness are not to be separated, the one being a SERM. necessary condition and qualification for the other; XL. and consequently, that it is the vainest thing in the world for any man to hope to enter into the *kingdom of God*, without endeavouring after *his righteousness*; there is so strong a connexion between them, that a man may as reasonably expect to be well and at ease without health, as to be happy without holiness; for this makes us like to God, and our likeness and conformity to God, is that alone which can make us capable of the blessed sight and enjoyment of God. We must be *partakers of the divine nature*, in order to our participation of the divine blessedness. And the consideration of this will effectually engage us to *seek the righteousness of God*, without which we shall never enter into *his kingdom*; and to *follow holiness*, without which no man shall see the Lord.

*Thirdly*, Let us always remember that *righteousness* is of a great extent, and comprehends in it all goodness; it takes in all the duties of religion, and the practice of all of them: it is a complication of all graces and virtues, of all the parts and ingredients, of all the duties and offices of a good man. To denominate a man *righteous*, all causes must concur; all the essential principles and parts of religion and goodness must meet together; knowledge and practice, faith and good works, right opinions and real virtues, an orthodox profession and a holy life, abstaining from sin and doing of righteousness, purity of heart and unspotted manners, godliness and honesty, the bridling of our tongue, and the government of our passions, and *above all things charity, which is the band of perfection*.

For *righteousness* is our conformity to the law of God, as *unrighteousness* and sin is the transgression of it: Now this, if it be real and sincere, will be uniform and universal, equally respecting all the laws of

SERM.

XL.



of God, and every part of our known duty, and will not content itself with an especial regard to one or two precepts of the law, though never so considerable, and then allow itself in the neglect and violation of the rest, no, nor with the observation of the duties of one table of the law, if it overlook the other; no nor with obedience to all the commandments of God, one only excepted. St. *James* hath put this very case, and determined it, *That he that shall keep the whole law, save only that he offend in one point, is guilty of all*; that is, he is not sincere in his obedience to the rest; And therefore if we *seek the righteousness of God*, our righteousness must be universal; *as he that hath called us is holy, so must we be holy in all manner of conversation*, in the tenor of our actions, and the whole course of our lives: and any one reigning sin and vice, any gross and notorious defect in the virtues of a good life, will spoil our *righteousness*, and will effectually shut us out of the *kingdom of heaven*.

*Fourthly*, Let us wisely subordinate the several parts and duties of religion to one another, according to the intrinsical worth and value of them, that so we may mind every part of religion in its due place, and according to the true nature and importance of it. Knowledge and faith are in order to practice, and a good life; and signifie nothing unless they produce that; the means of religion, such as prayer and fasting, diligent reading and hearing the word of God, reverent and devout receiving of the blessed sacrament, are of less account and value, than that which is the end of all these, which is to make us inwardly and really good, and *fruitful in all the works of righteousness, which by Jesus Christ are to the praise and glory of God*. And therefore the means of religion which I have mentioned, are to be regarded and used by us, in order to the attaining of these ends, without which they are mere formality and hypocrisy, and instead of finding

finding acceptance with God, they are *an abomination* SERM.  
*on to him, and his soul hates them.* XL.

And so likewise the circumstances of religion are less considerable than the substantial means and instruments of it. And therefore all rights and ceremonies are in religion of less consideration, than the substance of God's worship, and ought always to be subordinate to it. In like manner, the moral duties of religion, comprehended under *the two great commandments of the love of God, and our neighbour*, because they are of eternal and indispensable obligation, are to be preferred to matters of mere positive institution; and where they cannot stand together, that which is positive ought to be set aside, and to give way for the present to that which is moral and good in its own nature, and not only because it is commanded and enjoined; for in this case God hath expressly, declared that *he will have mercy and not sacrifice*. Upon which ground our Saviour declares, that the law of the *sabbath* ought to give place to *works of mercy*. Upon the same account peace and charity are to be valued above matters of nicety and scruple, of doubtful dispute and controversy; because the former are unquestionably good the latter doubtfully and uncertainly so.

All these things ought to be considered, and are of great moment to make a man sincerely and wisely religious. For men may keep a great stir about some parts of religion, and be very careful and diligent, zealous and earnest about the means and instruments of religion, and in the exercises of piety and devotion, and yet be destitute of the power and life of it, and fall short of that inward, and real, and substantial *righteousness*, which alone can qualify us for *the kingdom of God*.

The *fifth* and last direction I would give, is this; That we have a particular regard to the great duty of charity, or alms-giving this being very frequent in scripture called *righteousness*, as being an eminent  
part



SERM. part of religion and a great evidence of the truth,  
 XL. and sincerity of our piety. And this our Saviour  
 particularly directs to, as the way to the *kingdom of God*, Luke 12. 33. After this general exhortation, *to seek the kingdom of God*, he instanceth in *charity*, as the direct way to it; *give alms, provide for your selves bags that wax not old, a treasure in the heavens which faileth not.* And elsewhere our Saviour speaks of this grace and virtue, as that which, above all others, will make way for our admission into heaven, Luke 16. 9. *I say unto you, make to your selves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when ye fail, they may receive you (or ye may be received) into everlasting habitations.* And St. Paul calls it, *laying up in store for our selves a good foundation*; or (as the word may better be rendred in this place) *a good treasure against the time to come, that we may lay hold on eternal life*, 1 Tim. 6. 19. St. James speaks of it, as a main and most essential part of religion, and the great evidence of a true and sincere piety; Jam. 1. 27. *Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the father, is this; to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction.* Finally, our Lord instanceth in this, as the very thing which will admit us into, or shut us out of heaven; by the performance whereof we shall be absolved, and for the neglect whereof we shall be condemned in the judgment of the great day, Matth. 25. So that this part of righteousness or religion, ought in a more especial manner to be regarded by us; because upon the performance or neglect of this duty, our eternal happiness doth so much depend.

The *fourth* and last thing only remains to be spoken to; which is, to set before you the most proper and powerful motives and encouragements, to the minding of this great interest and concernment. But this will be the subject of another discourse.

# SERMON XLI.

*The Second  
Sermon on  
this Text.*

Religion, our first and great Concernment.

---

MATTH. vi. 33.

*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

**T**HESE words, which I began to discourse SERM.  
XLI. upon the last day, are a strict charge and command to all Christians, to mind the business of religion in the first place and to take all imaginable care to secure the happiness of another life; *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.* In the handling of which argument,

*First*, I explained what is meant by the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.

*Secondly*, I shewed what is meant by seeking these; and what by seeking them *first*.

*Thirdly*, I laid down some rules for our direction and furtherance in this great business.

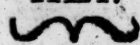
I shall now proceed to represent to you, in the

*Fourth* and *last* place, some of the most proper and powerful arguments and encouragements, to engage us to the minding of this great interest and concernment: amongst which, I shall in the last place particularly consider the encouragement here given in the text, *Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*

*First.*

SERM.

XLI.



*First*, My first argument shall be from the worth and excellency of the things we seek, *the kingdom of God and his righteousness*; which are certainly the greatest and best things we can seek. *The kingdom of God*, is the eternal salvation of our souls, everlasting life and happiness in another world, which, to animate our endeavours, and to tempt our ambition the more, are set forth to us under the notion of a *kingdom*. And what will not men do to obtain that? what pains will they not take? what hazards will they not run? what difficulties will they not grapple with, to break through if they can, to come to a *kingdom*? which when they have obtained, they are exposed to as many, and commonly to more cares and fears, to greater difficulties and dangers in the keeping than they were for the getting of it: And yet all this men will do for a *corruptible crown*, for one of the petty kingdoms and principalities of this world, which are continually tottering, and ready to be over-turned by open violence, or to be undermined by secret treachery. But *the kingdom* which I am speaking of and persuading you and myself to seek after, is not like the kingdoms of men, and of this world; it is called *the kingdom of God*, to signify to us the excellency and stability of it; as much beyond any of the kingdoms of this world, as the heavens are high above the earth, and as God is greater than man; a *kingdom which cannot be shaken, a crown which fadeth not away*, a scepter which cannot be wrested from us.

But to quit the metaphor, and speak to the thing; *the kingdom of God* imports the eternal salvation of our souls; I say of our *souls*, which both in respect of the dignity of our nature, and their immortal duration, are infinitely more valuable than any of the perishing things of this world, and ought to be much dearer to us. Other things are without us, they neither constitute our being, nor are essential to our happiness; but our souls are ourselves, and the loss of them



them is our utter ruin and destruction. So that no-  
thing is to be regarded by us with equal care and  
concernment, as the salvation of our immortal souls;  
that is, that we may be rescued from eternal misery,  
and everlastingly happy in another world. And can  
we be at too much cost and pains upon such a design,  
to escape so dismal a condition, so dreadful a ruin,  
as that of body and soul to all eternity? Can any  
man be concerned enough to bring about so great a  
good to himself? or, can he purchase it too dear,  
whatever he give or part with for it? a good so de-  
sirable, and so durable, as our being happy for ever.  
When we purchase the things of this world, the  
riches and honours of it, at the expence of so much  
time, and care, and trouble, we pay dear for trifles  
and fancies; but eternal happiness is a jewel of so  
inestimable a price, that a wise merchant will have  
it at any rate, and *sell all that he hath to purchase*  
*it.*

Of such value is *the kingdom of God*; and next to  
it is *righteousness*, which is the only way and means  
whereby this *kingdom* is to be attained, and therefore  
to be sought by us with the greatest diligence and  
earnestness: For that which is the only means to a  
great and desirable end, and which alone can make  
us capable of that end, and which in truth is a de-  
gree of it, is valuable next to the end, and almost  
equally with it; and such is *righteousness*, in respect of  
*the kingdom of God*; it is the only means to it, it is  
that alone that qualifies us, and makes us capable of  
happiness; nay, it is an essential ingredient in it,  
and that which does in a great measure constitute  
the happiness of heaven: for that temper of mind,  
that conformity and likeness to God, which holi-  
ness and righteousness brings us to, is the true foun-  
dation of our happiness, and according to the best  
apprehensions we have now of it; is the very formal  
cause and essence of our blessedness. So St. John  
tells us, 1 John 3. 2. *It doth not yet appear what*

SERM. *we shall be ; but we know that when he shall appear, we*  
 XLI. *shall be like him ;* that is, we do not now distinctly  
 understand wherein the happiness of the next life consists, we are not able to frame a clear and perfect idea of it ; but this we know in general, that it consists in our likeness to God, in a conformity to the moral perfections of the divine nature, which are expressed by the name of *purity* and *holiness* ; and therefore every one that hopes for the happiness of heaven, must endeavour after *holiness* ; every man that hath this hope in him, must purify himself, even as he is pure.

So that the things which I am pressing you to seek after, are most effectually recommended, by telling you what they are ; *the kingdom of God* is eternal life and happiness, and *his righteousness* is universal holiness and goodness, without which no man is qualified for this blessed state. Now if there be any thing better than goodness, any thing more desirable than a happiness which hath no bounds, nor no end ; do not mind them, nor look after them : But if there be not ; then certainly these are worthy of the care and endeavour of our whole life.

Secondly, Another consideration that should very much excite and quicken our endeavour and diligence in seeking these things, is the difficulty of obtaining them. This I confess, is no encouragement, but it is a very good motive and argument to whet our industry in seeking these things, when we plainly see that they are not to be had upon other terms. And this consideration our Saviour useth to quicken us to *strive* and to contend earnestly for eternal life, *Mat. 7. 14. Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth to life, and few there be that find it : And Luke 13. 24. strive to enter in at the strait gate ; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.*

Seeking here, in opposition to *striving*, is a faint and weak endeavour, which will not carry us through

through this narrow and difficult passage; and this SERM. is the reason why many miscarry, who make some XLI. attempts towards heaven; but they do not *strive*, they do not put forth any vigorous endeavours to get thither.

Now the difficulty of attaining eternal happiness, ariseth from the difficulty of the way and means to it; and it is therefore hard to attain *the kingdom of God*, because it is hard to attain *his righteousness*. As desirable as it is, it must be acknowledged very difficult for a man to raise himself to that temper and disposition of mind, so to subdue his lusts, and govern his passions, to bridle his tongue, and order all the actions of his life, as is necessary to qualify him for happiness, and to make him fit to be admitted into *the kingdom of God*.

And this difficulty is chiefly in ourselves, but greatly increased by temptation and opposition from without: Chiefly, I say, in ourselves, from the strong byas of our evil and corrupt inclinations, and the strong power of vitious habits and customs, which when they are grown inveterate, do tyrannize over us, and make us perfect slaves, and lead us captive at their pleasure; so that our nature must be quite changed, and as the Apostle expresth it, we must be *renewed in the spirit of our minds*, our souls must be new moulded and fashioned, we must be, as it were, *created*, and *born again*, before we can enter into *the kingdom of God*. In this our Saviour is positive and peremptory, *John 3. 33. Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*. This difficulty indeed is greatest at first, but it is considerable afterwards, 'till a thorough change be made, and new inclinations planted in us, and the contrary habits of grace and virtue be super-induced.

And that which encreaseth the difficulty is outward temptation and opposition from the world, and the devil; which to withstand and resist, requires



SERM. great courage and resolution, great watchfulness and  
 XLI. guard over ourselves. But yet for our comfort, these  
 ~~~~~ difficulties are not insuperable to that grace and assistance, which God is always ready to afford to us upon so good an occasion, and to so good a purpose; *greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* And this, I am sure, is matter of great encouragement to us, that though the difficulty of *working out our salvation* be great, yet if we do in good earnest set about it, God is ready to assist and second our sincere endeavours, *to work in us both to will and to do of his own goodness*, and so to prevent us with his gracious favour, and to further us with his continual aid, that finally by his mercy we may obtain eternal life.

Thirdly, Another powerful argument to care and diligence, is the fatal danger of miscarriage in a matter of so great concernment. We may do many things in religion, and take some pains to get to heaven, and yet fall short of it. The rich young man in the Gospel, our Saviour tells us, was *not far from the kingdom of God*, and he broke with our Saviour only upon one point, he was too much addicted to the world, and loth to part with his great possessions, and distribute them in charity to the poor, and thereupon he left our Saviour, and, for any thing we can find, never returned to him again.

If the world govern and bear sway in our hearts, if we *mind earthly things* first, and make these our chief care and design, *the kingdom of God and his righteousness* shall not be added unto us; if we will not mind them *in the first place*, they are too good to be accessaries.

And if upon any one point we miscarry, either out of love to the world, or affection to any other lust or vice that we are loth to part withal, our miscarriage is fatal, and the ruin which we bring upon ourselves irreparable; for the soul once lost, is lost for ever. If we have neglected the opportunity of
working

working out our own salvation, while we are in this world, it will never return into our power again, death will shut the door against us, and we shall never see the kingdom of God. SERM. XLI.

Fourthly, It is a mighty encouragement to us to consider, that if we sincerely *seek the kingdom of God, and his righteousness*, there is not only a fair probability of obtaining them, but all the security we can desire. Men may be in good earnest for the things of this world, may love them with all their hearts and souls (as we see too many do) and seek them with all their might and strength, and yet after all, their endeavours may be shamefully frustrated and disappointed of their end. There are many examples of this kind daily before our eyes, and yet men are not discouraged from seeking these things. A fair probability, nay, almost a possibility of attaining them, is enough to a worldly-minded man to drudge and toil for them. Why; the same affection, the same zeal, the same unwearied endeavour to please God, and to save our souls, would infallibly bring us to heaven. It was a sad but true saying of cardinal *Wolsey*, when he was leaving the world, "Had I been but as careful to please God, as I have been to serve my prince, he would not have forsaken me now in the time of my grey hairs."

Nay, it is to be hoped, that less diligence and care about the concernments of our souls, and another life, than many men use about the things of this life, will secure our eternal happiness, or else it is to be feared, that but very few would be saved: And who would not place his industry and endeavour upon a design in which he is sure not to miscarry, if he do but heartily and in good earnest pursue it? especially when it will be of infinite greater advantage to him, than any design he can propound to himself for this world. If a man may be certainly happy for ever, upon the same, or easier terms, than he can ordinarily compass any of those little designs

SERM. which men propose to themselves in this world, who
 XLI. would not seek that which is most worthy the having,
 and which he is surest to maintain.

Fifthly and lastly, The encouragement here in the text is not inconsiderable; that if we *seek the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, all these things shall be added unto us.* This certainly is a very tempting consideration; for who would not be glad to reconcile the enjoyment of this world with the hopes of heaven and eternal happiness? But men do not generally like our Saviour's method, they would seek the things of this world in the first place, and get to heaven at last; they would be content to seek the one, and have the other cast in and conferred upon them, without their seeking. But this will not be granted, this way will not do. And yet our Saviour has gone as far as one would think could in reason be desired; he hath promised that if we will make religion, and the salvation of our souls, our first and chief care, that *all these things shall be added unto us.* So that the design of going to heaven, and being happy for ever, is no ways inconsistent with a competent portion of the things of this life. *Godliness* (the Apostle tells us) *bath the promise of this life, and of that which is to come.* The business of religion, the practice of a holy and virtuous life, is no hindrance to a man's thriving in his temporal estate; nay, in many respects it is apt to promote and advance it; by engaging us to diligence in our calling, and by deriving the blessing of God upon our honest and lawful endeavours; by obliging us to the strict and constant practice of truth, and justice, and fidelity in all our dealings and commerce, which are the best way to establish a clear and solid reputation, and good esteem among men, which is an unspeakable advantage in business, and, at the long run, one of the best and most lasting instruments of prosperity and success.

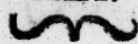
Besides,

Besides, that religion frees a man from those passions and vices, which do naturally tend to dissipate and ruin mens estates; as intemperance and lewdness, which are every way chargeable vices, and do not only take men off from business, and render them unfit for it; but waste their estates, and bring many other inconveniences upon their persons and families. Religion makes men meek, and peaceable, and inoffensive in word and deed, which is a great security against chargeable suits and contentions, and all sorts of injuries and affronts from others. Among all the beatitudes of our Saviour, he only promiseth temporal happiness to meekness, *blest are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.* They who provoke and offend no body, are likely to be least disturbed and disquieted by others in their possessions and enjoyments; *Who will harm you* (saith the Apostle, 1 Pet. 3. 13.) *if ye be followers of that which is good?* Some may be so perverse as to persecute a man for his goodness; but it rarely happens; most men have not only a kindness, but a veneration for true goodness.

By all these ways religion naturally tends to the temporal prosperity of men, and the promoting of their welfare and happiness, even in this world; besides that the providence of God is very peculiarly concerned for good men, and a special blessing attends them in all their undertakings. So that excepting the case of persecution (which God will particularly consider, and reward in another world) the religious and good man, who sincerely *seeks the kingdom of God, and his righteousness* stands as fair, and is upon as good terms, for all the lawful enjoyments of this world, as he that makes it his only design to be rich and great in this world; nay, as to the necessities of this life, and a competency of outward things, he hath a much greater and better security from the providence and promise of God, than the men of the world have by all their care and pains.

SERM.

XLI.



Besides, that he hath this considerable advantage, by mingling these things only as accessaries, that if he miss of them, he hath something better to support him in the want of them; being secure of a happiness which this world can neither give nor take from him. But now the worldly man, if he be defeated in his designs, is of all men most miserable, because he hath nothing else to comfort him, nothing else to trust to; he fails of his hopes as to this world, and hath done what in him lies to make his case desperate as to the other.

Upon all these considerations and encouragements, you see how reasonable it is, that we should make religion, and the concernment of another life, our great care and business. And yet how are these neglected by the greatest part of mankind! and by the best of us (God knows) not minded as they ought, and as they deserve! What can we say for ourselves in excuse of so intolerable a folly? There are two or three things which men commonly pretend, if not in justification, yet in mitigation and excuse of this great neglect.

First, They pretend great difficulties and discouragements in the ways of religion. This I have already acknowledged to be true, so far as to awaken our care, and to whet our industry; but by no means to make us despond and give over all care of so great a concernment, because of the difficulties it is attended withal. Men who have no mind to a thing, are apt to imagine great difficulties in the attaining of it, and to magnify them in their fancies beyond reason. As the people of *Israel*, when they were to enter into *Canaan* (which was the type of the kingdom of heaven) represented the inhabitants of the land, whom they were to conquer, more terrible than in truth they were; reporting to one another, that the land was full of giants, and sons of *Anak*, men of prodigious stature, and cities walled up to heaven. And this the wise man observes to be the perpetual excuse

cuse of the *slothful*; when they have no mind to a SERM. thing, they say *there is a lion in the way*; that is, XLI. they fancy to themselves dangers and terrors which are not. Thus men who are averse from religion, and have no mind to be at the trouble and pains to get to heaven, are apt to complain of the monstrous and insuperable difficulties of religion, and how hard it is for a man to mortify his lusts, and subdue his appetites, and govern his passions, and to do all those things which are necessary to bring him to heaven. Well! it is acknowledged to be difficult, and is it not so to get an estate, and to rise to any thing in this world? The true pains which men take about these things, shew that they are difficult; only when men have a mind to a thing, and their heart is set upon it, they do not stand to complain of the difficulty, but buckle to it, and grapple with it.

Is religion difficult? And what is not so, that is good for any thing? Is not the law a difficult and crabbed study? Does it not require great labour, and perpetual drudging to excel in any kind of knowledge, to be master of any art or profession? In a word, is there any thing in the world worthy the having, that is to be gotten without pains? And is eternal life and glory the only slight and inconsiderable thing, that is not worth our care and industry? Is it fit that so great a good should be exposed to the faint and idle wishes, to the cheap and lazy endeavours of slothful men? For what reason? Nay, with what conscience can he bid less for heaven and eternal life, than men are contented to give for the things of this world; things of no value in comparison, not worthy the toiling for, not sure to be attained by all our endeavours; things which *perish in the using*, and which, when we have them, we are liable to be deprived of by a thousand accidents? One fit of a fever may shatter our understandings, and confound all our knowledge, and turn us into fools and ideots; an inundation or a fire may sweep
away

SERM. away and devour our estates; a succession of calamities may in a few hours make the richest and greatest man as poor as *Job*, and set him upon a dunghil.

XLI.

But be the difficulty what it will of attaining *the kingdom of God and his righteousness*, they are to be fought at any rate; because they are absolutely necessary, and we miserable and undone if we have them not. And therefore not to dissemble in the matter, the difficulties of religion are considerable; but then they are much greater at first, and will every day abate and grow less, and the work by degrees will become easy, and turn into pleasure and delight; a pleasure so great, as none knows but he that hath it; and he that hath it, would not exchange it for all the sensual pleasures and enjoyments of this world.

Secondly, Others pretend want of time for the minding of so great a work. And 'tis very true, that all persons have not equal leisure for this purpose; some are much more straitened than others, and more taken up with the necessary cares of this life: But God hath put no man upon this hard necessity, that for want of time he shall be forced to neglect his body and his health, his family and estate, to save his soul. And yet if any man were brought to this distress, it were well worth his while to secure his eternal salvation, though it were with the neglect and loss of all other things. But those who are most straitned for time, have so much as is absolutely necessary: for there is a considerable part of religion which does not require time, but resolution and care: Not to commit sin, not to break the laws of God, not to be intemperate, *to make no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof*, does not spend time, but saves it for better purposes; so that every man hath time not to do that which he ought not to do: And for the *positive* part of religion, whether it consists in the exercise of our minds, or in the external acts of religion: no man is so distressed but he hath

hath time to think of heaven, and eternity ; time to love God, to esteem him, and delight in him above all things. And this a man may do very frequently, and very acceptably, while he is labouring and travelling about his worldly affairs, while his hand is upon the plough, his heart may be with God ; and while he converseth here upon earth, his thoughts and affections may be in heaven. Every man hath time to pray to God every day, for his mercy and forgiveness, for his grace and assistance, for his preservation and support, and to thank him heartily for all his blessings and benefits. And a little time seriously employed in this kind, would have the same acceptance with God, as the more solemn and longer devotions of those who have more leisure and opportunities for them. To be sure, we have all of us time to serve God upon his own day, and to employ it wholly in the exercises of piety, and the care and consideration of our souls.

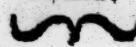
But this, when all is said, is the case but of a very few ; most of us have no colour for this complaint ; *non inopes temporis, sed prodigi sumus* (as Seneca says) “ we are not poor, but prodigal of our time, and “ lavish it away profusely upon folly and vanity.” Our vices and lusts, our pleasures and diversions, consume and divert those precious hours, which should be employed to these better purposes ; nay, many times time oppresseth us, and is a burthen to us, and lies upon our hands, and we know not how to get rid of it ; and yet we chuse rather to let it run waste, than to bestow it upon religion, and the care of our soul ; insomuch that I fear this will be the condition of many, that when they were at a loss what to do with their time, and knew not how to spend it, they would not lay it out upon that which was best and most necessary ; for this surely is the very best use that can be made of time, to prepare and provide for eternity.

Thirdly,

SERM.
XLI.


SERM.

XLI.



Thirdly, Others pretend it will be time enough to mind these things hereafter. But this (as bad excuses seldom hang together, and agree with one another) directly contradicts the former pretence, which supposeth so much time necessary, and more than many have to spare; and yet now they would make us believe that a very little time will suffice for this work, and that it may be done at any time, even just when we are going out of this world. But this, of all other, is the strangest interpretation of *seeking the kingdom of God, and his righteousness first*, to put it off to the very last. This surely is a greater error on the other hand, to think that the business of religion is so quickly to be dispatched, and that the great work of our lives can be crowded into so narrow a corner of it, that the time of sickness and old-age, nay, the hour of death, well employed to this purpose, will be sufficient. Alas! what can we then do that is good for any thing? that can in reason be thought either acceptable to God, or available for ourselves? When we have not sense and understanding enough to dispose of our temporal concerns, and to make our wills, do we think we shall be fit to repent of the sins and miscarriages of our whole lives, and to make our peace with God? Every man must not expect to have *Saul's* fortune, who when he was wearied with seeking his father's asses, met with a kingdom. We must not think when we are tired with pursuing the follies and vanities of this world, to retire into heaven, and to sit down with *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob* in the kingdom of heaven.

Our Saviour hath taken care to caution us against this desperate folly, by a parable to this very purpose, of the *foolish virgins*, who having trifled away their time till the bridegroom was coming, and neglected to get *oil into their lamps* (by which we are to understand all those good preparations and dispositions which are necessary to qualify us for the kingdom

dom

dom of God) I say, having neglected their opportunity of getting this *oyl*, while they were looking after it too late, the door was shut against them; they thought to have repaired all at last, by borrowing of others, and supplying themselves that way. SERM. XLI.

And thus many deceive themselves, hoping to be supplied out of another store, when they have no grace and goodness of their own; out of the treasure of the church, from the redundant merit of the saints, and the works of supererogation; of which some believe (I know not for what reason) that there is a great stock which the *Pope* may dispose of, to supply those who have taken no care to get *oyl* into their lamps. But I know not for what reason works of supererogation are supposed; *the wise virgins* knew not of any merit they had to spare, it was *the foolish virgins* only that entertained this senseless conceit. I am sure the parable insinuates the quite contrary, that the best and holiest persons (which are represented by the *wise virgins*) have nothing to spare for the supply of others, who have been careless of their souls; *the foolish said unto the wise, give us of your oyl, for our lamps are gone out; but the wise answered, saying, not so, lest there be not enough for us and you, but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.* It seems they had no works of supererogation that they knew of, but they do ironically send them to a market that was set up somewhere, and where these things were pretended to be sold; but how they sped the conclusion of the parable tells us, that whilst they were running about in great haste to make this purchase of the merits and good works of others, *the bridegroom came*, and the wise virgins that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the rest were shut out.

And there are those likewise among ourselves, who having been careless to qualify themselves for *the kingdom of God*, hope to be supplied out of the infinite treasure of Christ's merits: But this also is a
vain

vain hope. For though there be merit enough in the death and sufferings of Christ to save mankind, yet no man can lay claim thereto, who does not perform the conditions of the Gospel.

Others think by sending for the minister, when the physician hath given them over, to receive in few hours such advice and direction, as will do their business as effectually, as if they had minded religion all their lives long; and that a few devout prayers said over them when they are just embarking for another world, will, like a magical wind, immediately waft them over into the regions of bliss and immortality.

But let us not deceive ourselves; we may defer the business so long, till we shall get nothing by our late application to God, and crying to him, *Lord, Lord, open unto us*, but that severe answer, *Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, I know ye not whence ye are*. If we would not have *this* our doom, let us *first seek the kingdom of God, and his righteousness*, that so *having our fruit unto holiness, our end may be everlasting life*.

SERMON XLII.

The Wisdom of Religion.

PSAL. cxix. 96.

I have seen an end of all perfection; but thy commandment is exceeding broad.

SERM.
XLII.
~

THIS *Psalm* seems to have a great deal more of poetical number and skill in it, than at this distance from the time and age in which it was written, we can easily understand:

stand: the main scope and design of it is very plain SERM.
and obvious; namely, to magnify the law of God, XLII.
and the observation of its precepts, as that wherein
true religion doth mainly consist. And indeed, if
we attentively read and consider it, every part of
this *Psalms* does with great variety of expression, and
yet very little difference of the sense, descant upon
the same ground, *viz.* the excellency and perfection
of the law of God. And the words of the *text* seem
to be as full and comprehensive of the sense and de-
sign of the whole *Psalms*, as any one sentence in it;
*I have seen an end of all perfection; but thy command-
ment is exceeding broad.*

These words are variously rendered, and under-
stood by interpreters, who yet in this variety do ve-
ry much conspire and agree in the same sense. The
Chaldee paraphrase renders the words thus, *I have
seen an end of all things, about which I have employed
my care; but thy commandment is very large.* The *Sy-
riac* version thus, *I have seen an end of all regions and
countries* (that is, I have found the compass of this
habitable world to be finite and limited) *but thy
commandment is of a vast extent.* Others explain it
thus, *I have seen an end of all perfection*, that is, of
all the things of this world, which men value and
esteem at so high a rate; of all worldly wisdom and
knowledge, of wealth and honour, and greatness,
which do all perish and pass away; *but thy law is e-
ternal, and still abideth the same*; or, as the scripture
elsewhere expresseth it, *the word of the Lord endureth
for ever.*

Thy law; that is, the rule of our duty natural and
revealed; or, in a word, religion, which consists
in the knowledge and practice of the laws of God,
is of greater perfection, than all other things which
are so highly valued in this world; for the perfecti-
on of it is infinite, and of a vast influence and ex-
tent; it reacheth to the whole man, to the happi-
ness of body and soul; to our whole duration both
in

SERM. in this world, and the next; of this life, and of
 XLII. that which is to come. And this will clearly appear,
 if we consider the *reasonableness* and the *wisdom of religion*, which consists in the knowledge of God, and the keeping of his laws.

First, The *reasonableness of religion*, which is able to give a very good account of itself, because it settles the mind of man upon a firm basis, and keeps it from rolling in perpetual uncertainty; whereas atheism and infidelity wants a stable foundation, it centers no where but in the denial of God and religion, and yet substitutes no principle, no tenable and constituent scheme of things in the place of them; its whole business is to unravel all things, to unsettle the mind of man, and to shake all the common notions and received principles of mankind; it bends its whole force to pull down and to destroy, but lays no foundation to build any thing upon, in the stead of that which it pulls down.

It runs upon that great absurdity which *Aristotle* (who was always thought a great master of reason) does every where decry, as a principle unworthy of a philosopher; namely, a progress of causes *in infinitum*, and without end; that this was the cause of that, and a third thing of that, and so on without end, which amounts to just nothing; and finally resolves an infinite number of effects into no first cause; than which nothing can be more unskilful and bungling, and less worthy of a philosopher. But this I do not intend at present to insist upon, having treated largely on the same subject upon another * occasion. I shall therefore proceed in the

*Vid
 Serm. I.
 of the first
 Vol. published by
 the Author.

Second place, to consider the *wisdom of religion*. *The fear of the Lord is wisdom*, so saith the *Psalmist*; it is true wisdom indeed, it is the *beginning of wisdom*, *caput sapientiae*, the top and perfection of all wisdom. Here true wisdom begins, and upon this foundation it is raised and carried on to perfection; and I shall in my following discourse endeavour to make out these *two* things,

First,

First, That true wisdom begins and is founded in religion, in the fear of God, and in the keeping of his commandments. SERM. XLII.

Secondly, That this is the perfection of wisdom; there is no wisdom without this, nor beyond it.

First, True wisdom begins and is founded in religion, and the fear of God, and regard to his laws. This is the first principle of wisdom, and the foundation upon which the whole design of our happiness is to be built: This is in the first place to be supposed, and to be taken into consideration in all the designs and actions of men: this is to govern our whole life, and to have a main influence upon all the affairs and concernments of it: As the first principle of human society, and that which is to run through the whole frame of it, is the publick good; this was always to be taken into consideration, and to give law to all laws and constitutions about it: so religion is the first principle of human wisdom, by which all our actions are to be conducted and governed; and all wisdom, which does not begin here, and lay religion for its foundation, is preposterous, and begins at the wrong end; and is just as if in the forming of human society, every one in the settlement of the constitution, and the framing of laws, should have an eye to his own private and particular advantage, without regard to the publick good, which is the great end of society, and the rule and measure of government and laws, and in the last issue and result of things, the only way to procure the settled welfare, and to secure the lasting interests of particular persons, so far as that is consistent with the publick good. And it would be a very preposterous policy to go about to found human society upon any other terms, and would certainly end in mischief and confusion.

And such is all the wisdom of men, in relation to their true happiness, which does not begin with religion, and lay its foundation there: which does not

SERM. take into consideration God and his providence, and
 XLII. a future state of rewards and punishments after this
 life. All wisdom which does not proceed upon a
 supposition of the truth and reality of these principles,
 will certainly end in shame and disappointment, in
 misery and ruin ; because it builds a house upon the
 sand, which when it comes to be tried by strefs of
 weather, and assaulted by violent storms, will un-
 doubtedly fall, and the fall of it will be great.

And this error every man commits, who pursues
 happiness by following his own inclination, and gra-
 tifying his irregular desires, without any considera-
 tion of God, and of the restraint which his laws have
 laid upon us, not for his own pleasure, but for our
 good. For when all things are duly considered,
 and all accounts cast up, it will appear upon a just
 calculation of things, that all the restraints which
 the laws of God lay upon men, are highly reasona-
 ble, and greatly for their benefit and advantage, and
 do not abridge us of any true pleasure or happiness,
 but are wise and merciful provisions of heaven, to
 prevent our harm and mischief ; so that we are not
 wise, if we act without regard to God, and his
 laws, and are not willing to be governed by him,
 who loves us better than we do our selves, and tru-
 ly designs our happiness, and commands us nothing
 but what directly tends to it. For the laws of God
 are not arbitrary constitutions, and mere instances of
 sovereign will and power ; but wise rules and means
 to procure and advance our happiness.

And in like manner, all that wisdom which men
 use to compass their worldly designs, of riches and
 greatness, without consideration of the providence
 of God, and dependance upon it for the success of
 our affairs, is all perfect folly and mistake. For
 though the design be never so well laid, and vigo-
 rously prosecuted, and no means which human wis-
 dom can devise for the attaining of our end, have
 been

been omitted by us; yet if we leave God out of the account, we forget that which is principal, and signifies more to the success of any design, than all other things put together. For if God favours our designs, the most improbable shall take effect; and if he blow upon them, the most likely shall miscarry. Whenever he pleaseth to interpose to cross the counsels and designs of men, *the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong; neither yet bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor favour to men of skill; but time and chance happens to all.* SERM. XLII.

So that it is great folly not to consider the providence of God in all our designs and undertakings, not to implore his favour and blessing, without which nothing that we take in hand can prosper. That which is principal to any purpose, ought to be considered in the first place, nothing being to be attempted either without, or against it. And such is the providence of God in all human affairs; it is more considerable to the promoting or hindering of any event, than all things in the world besides; and therefore all policy, which sets aside God and his providence, is vain; because *there is no wisdom, nor understanding, nor counsel against the Lord.*

So likewise all that wisdom which only considers and regards this short life, and the narrow concerns of it, and makes provision only for our welfare in this world; and therefore can only be tempted with the hopes of temporal advantages, and terrified only with the danger of temporal evils and sufferings; but hath no sense of an immortal spirit within us, no prospect of a life after death, no consideration of a happy or miserable eternity, of rewards and punishments, infinitely greater than all the temptations and terrors of time and sense; I say, all this is a preposterous and pernicious wisdom, and proceeds upon a false supposition, and a quite contrary scheme of things to what really is; and consequently our whole life, and all the designs and actions

SERM. actions of it, do run upon a perpetual mistake, and
 XLII. a false stating of our own case; and whatever we do
 pursuant to this mistake is foolish and hurtful, and
 so far from conducing to our true interest, that it is
 all either beside it, or contrary to it; because we act
 upon a supposal only of this life, and a being only
 in this world, and that there is nothing either to be
 feared or hoped for beyond it; and being thus grossly
 mistaken, we set our hearts only upon temporal
 things, and study our present security and satisfacti-
 on, and in all our counsels and actions are swayed
 only by the consideration of temporal good and
 evil, of the present ease and pleasure, the disturbance
 and pain of our fleshly and sensual parts; without
 any sense of our own immortality, and of that everlast-
 ing state which remains for us in another world.

But there is (my brethren) most certainly, there is
 another life after this; we are not *beasts*, if we do
 not make our selves so; and if we die, we shall not
 die like them, neither shall our last end be like theirs.
 For whatever we may think or wish, it shall not be
 in our power to extinguish our own beings when we
 have a mind to be rid of them, and to chuse whe-
 ther or no we shall live for ever.

And if this be a false scheme of things which we
 have framed to ourselves, and proceed upon (as un-
 doubtedly it is) then our whole life is one great error,
 and a perpetual mistake, and we are quite wrong in
 all that we design to do. Our wisdom hath begun
 at the wrong end, and we have made a false calcu-
 lation and account of things, and have put our case
 otherwise than it is; and the farther we proceed up-
 on this mistake, our miscarriage will be so much the
 more fatal in the issue. But if our wisdom begin at
 the right end, and our case be truly stated, that God
 hath put into these frail and mortal bodies of ours,
 immortal spirits that shall live for ever; and hath
 sent us into this world to sojourn here for a little
 while, and to be disciplined and trained up for
 eternity;

eternity; and that after a short proof and tryal of SERM.
our obedience, we shall be translated into an ever- XLII.
lasting state of unspeakable happiness or misery, ac-
cording as we have demeaned ourselves in this world;
if we believe this to be truly our case, our interest is
then plainly before us, and we see where our happiness
lies, and what remains for us to do, in order to
the obtaining of it, and what we are to expect to
suffer, if we do it not.

Now this foundation being laid, it is evident,
that the best thing we can do for ourselves, is to provide
for our future state, and to secure the everlasting
happiness of another life. And the best way to
do that, is to live in obedience to those laws which
our maker and our sovereign hath prescribed to us;
and according to which he will one day sentence us
to eternal rewards or punishments.

It is evident likewise, that all our sensual appetites
and desires are to be bounded by the rules of reason
and virtue, which are the laws of God; and that no
present ease and pleasure, trouble and suffering, are
to be considered and regarded by us, in competition
with the things which are eternal; and that sin is of all
other the greatest evil, and most mischievous to our
main interest, and therefore with all possible care to
be avoided; and that the favour of God is to be
sought, and the salvation of our souls to be provided
for, at any pains and expence whatsoever, and
even with the hazard and loss of our dearest interests
in this world, yea and of life itself.

And now if this matter hath been rightly stated,
then religion, and the fear of God, is the first principle
and foundation of true wisdom, and that which we
are to consider, and take along with us in all the
designs and actions of our lives, and all wisdom
which does not begin here, is preposterous, and
will prove folly in the issue.

Secondly, as religion is the beginning of wisdom,
so it is the perfection of it, it is the highest point of
wisdom,

SERM. wisdom, in which we can be instructed, *The fear of*
 XLII. *the Lord* (says Solomon, Prov. 15. 33.) *is the instructi-*
 *on of wisdom. A good understanding* (says David,
 Psal. 111. 10.) *have all they that do his commandments.*
 The practice of religion is the perfection of wisdom;
 and he understands himself best, who lives most
 according to the laws of God. And this I might
 shew, by instancing in particular virtues, the prac-
 tice whereof is much wiser, and every way more for
 our interest, than the contrary vices; but this is too
 large an argument to engage in, and therefore I
 shall content myself at present, briefly to shew, that
 the chief characters and properties of wisdom do all
 meet in religion, and agree to it.

The first point of wisdom is to understand our true
 interest, and to be right in our main end; and in
 this, religion will best instruct and direct us. And
 if we be right in our main end, and true to the in-
 terest of it, we cannot miscarry: But if a man mis-
 take in this, he errs fatally, and his whole life is
 vanity and folly.

Another property of wisdom is to be steady and
 vigorous in the prosecution of our main end; to
 oblige us hereto, religion gives us the most power-
 ful arguments, the glorious happiness, and the dis-
 mal misery of another world.

The next point of wisdom is, to make all things
 stoop and become subservient to our main end. And
 wherever religion bears sway, it will make all other
 things subordinate to the salvation of our souls, and
 the interests of our everlasting happiness; as the men
 of this world make every thing to submit and give
 way to their covetous, and ambitious, and sensual
 designs.

Another part of wisdom is to consider the future,
 and to look to the last end and issue of things. It
 is a common folly among men, to be so intent upon
 the present, as to have little or no regard to the fu-
 ture, to what will be hereafter. Men design and
 labour

labour for this present life, and their short continu-
ance here in this world, without taking into serious
consideration their main duration, and their eternal
abode in another world. But religion gives us a
clear prospect of a life after death, and overlooks
time, and makes eternity always present to us, and
minds us of making timely provision and preparation
for it. It takes into consideration our whole dura-
tion, and inspires us with wisdom, to look to the
end of things, and to what will be hereafter, as
well as to what is present.

It is likewise a great property of wisdom, to se-
cure the main chance, and to run no hazard in *that*.
And this religion directs us to the care of, because
the neglect of it will prove fatal.

Another mark of wisdom is, to lay hold of op-
portunities, those especially, which, when they are
once past, will never return again. There are some
seasons wherein great things may be done, which if
they be let slip, are never to be retrieved. A wise
man will lay hold of these, and improve them: and
religion inculcates this principle of wisdom upon us,
that this life is the opportunity of doing great things
for ourselves, and of making ourselves for ever; this
very day and hour may, for ought we know, be the
last and only opportunity of repentance, and ma-
king our peace with God: therefore *to day, whilst it
is called to day*, let us set about this necessary work,
lest any of us be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin;
to-morrow it may be too late to begin it, and the
justice of God may cut us off whilst we are wilfully
delaying it; and the opportunities of saving our im-
mortal souls, may vanish, and be for ever hid from
our eyes.

The next property of wisdom, is to foresee dan-
gers, and to take timely care to prevent them. *The
prudent man* (saith Solomon) *foreseeth the evil, and
bideth himself*; that is, shelters and secures himself a-
gainst it; *but the simple pass on, and are punished*;

SERM. that is, the evil overtakes them, and their folly is
 XLII. punished in their fatal ruin. Now the greatest danger is from the greatest power; even from *him who is able to save and to destroy*; I will tell you (says the wisdom of God) *whom ye shall fear; fear him, who after he hath killed, can destroy both body and soul in hell.*

Again, another main point of wisdom, is to do as little as we can to be repented of, trusting rather to the wisdom of prevention, than to that of remedy. Religion first teacheth men innocency, and not to offend; but in case we do (as in many things we offend all) it then directs us to repentance, as the only remedy. But this certainly is folly, to sin in hopes of repentance, that is, first to make work for repentance, and then run the hazard of it; for we may certainly sin, but it is not certain that we shall repent. And if it were, yet it is great folly to lay in before-hand, and to make work for trouble; *ne tu stultus homuncio es, qui malis veniam precari, quam non peccare*, was a wise saying of old Cato; *thou art* (says he) *a silly man indeed, who chusest rather to ask forgiveness, than not to offend.* If a man have the best remedy in the world, he would not make himself sick to try the virtue of it, and it is a known comparison, and a very fit one, that repentance is *tabula post naufragium*, a plank after shipwreck. But I am greatly afraid that thousands of souls, who have trusted to it, have perished before they could get to land, with this plank in their arms.

The last character of wisdom I shall mention is, in all things to consult the peace and satisfaction of our own minds, without which nothing else can make us happy; and this obedience to the laws of God does naturally procure. *Great peace have they* (says David) *that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them.* The work of righteousness, says the prophet, shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness, and assurance for ever. The fear of God, and the keeping of his

com-

commandments, is the best preservative against the SERM. troubles of a guilty conscience, and the terrifying XLII. apprehensions of a future judgment. And this is the great wisdom of religion, that whosoever liveth according to the rules and precepts of it, prevents the chief causes of discontent, and lays the surest foundation of a perpetual satisfaction of mind, a jewel of inestimable price, which none knows but he that has it, and he that hath it, knows the value of it too well to part with it for *the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season*, and which always prove *bitterness in the end*, and for the little sweetness which they yielded, leave a terrible sting behind them.

Thus I have briefly represented the *reasonableness* and *wisdom of religion*. It is of infinite perfection, and of a vast influence and extent, it reacheth to the whole man, the happiness of soul and body; and to our whole duration, the happiness of this world and the next; for *godliness* (that is, true religion and piety) *both the promise of this life, and that which is to come*.

But now where are the effects of true religion, in the full compass and extent of it, to be found? such real effects as do in any measure bear a proportion to the power and perfection of their cause? for nothing certainly is more excellent and amiable in its definition than true religion is; but alas! how imperfect is it in the subject? I mean in us, who ought to shew forth the power and perfection of it, in the practice and actions of our lives, the best demonstration of the excellent frame and temper of our minds.

What a conflict and struggling do the best men find between their inclination and their duty? how hard to reconcile our practice and our knowledge, and to make our lives agree with the reason of our minds, and the clear conviction of our consciences? how difficult for a man in this dangerous and imperfect state, to be in any measure either so wise or
good

SERM. good as he ought? how rare is it for a man to be
 XLII. good-natured, gentle, and easy to be entreated,
 without being often betrayed into some weakness
 and sinful compliances, especially in the bad company of our betters? how next to impossible is it to be strict and severe in our lives, without being sour? to govern our lives with that perpetual caution, and to maintain that evenness of temper, as not to be sometimes peevish and passionate? and when we are so, not to be apt to say with *Jonah*, *we do well to be angry?*

There are *two* precepts in the New Testament, that seem to me to be the nicest of all other, and hardest to be put in practice. One is that of our blessed Saviour, *be wise as serpents, and as innocent as doves*. How hard is it to hit upon the just temper of wisdom and innocency; to be wise, and hurt no body; to be innocent, without being silly? The other is, that of the Apostle, *be angry and sin not*. How difficult is this, never to be angry but upon just cause? and when the cause of our anger is just, not to be transported beyond due bounds, either as to the degree of our anger, or as to the duration and continuance of it; this is so very nice a matter, that one would be almost tempted to think that this were in effect a prohibition of anger in any case; *be ye angry, and sin not*; be ye so, if ye can without sin. I believe whosoever observes it, will find that it is as easy to suppress this passion at any time, as to give way to it, without offending in one kind, or other. But to proceed,

How hard a matter is it, to be much in company, and free in conversation, and not to be infected by it? to live in the midst of a wicked world, and yet to keep ourselves free from the vices of it? to be temperate in the use of things pleasing, so as neither to injure our health, nor to lose the use of our reason, nor to offend against conscience? to fast often, without being conceited of it, and bargaining as it were with

with God for some greater liberties in another kind; SERM.
and without censuring those who do not tie up them- XLII.
selves to our strict rules either of piety or abstinence? 
when perhaps they have neither the same opportunities of doing it, nor the same reason to do it that we have; nay, perhaps have a much better reason for not doing just as we do: for no man is to prescribe to others his own private method, either of fasting, or of devotion, as if he were the *rule*, and his example a kind of *proclamation*, enjoining all his neighbours the same days of fasting and prayer which he himself, for reasons best known to himself, thinks fit to observe.

And then how hard is it to be chearful without being vain? and grave and serious without being morose? to be useful and instructive to others in our conversation and discourse, without assuming too much authority to ourselves? which is not the best and most effectual way of doing good to others; there being something in the nature of man, which had rather take a hint and intimation from another, to advise himself, and would rather chuse to imitate the silent good example which they see in another, than to have either his advice or his example imposed upon them.

How difficult is it to have a mind equal to every condition, and to be content with mean and moderate things? to be patient in adversity, and humble in prosperity, and meek upon sudden and violent provocations? to keep our passions free from getting head of our reason, and our zeal from out-running our knowledge? to have a will perfectly submitted and resigned to the will of God, even when it lies cross and thwart to ours, so that whatever pleases God should please us? to be resolute, when our duty happens to be difficult and dangerous; or even to believe that to be our duty (though it certainly be so) which is very inconvenient for us to do? to hold out and be unwearied in well-doing? to be careful

SERM. to preserve our lives, and yet upon a great occasion,
 XLII. and whenever God calls for them, to be content to
 lay them down.

To be *wise* and *innocent* ; *men in understanding*, and yet *in malice children* ? to have many great virtues, and not to want that which gives the great lustre to them all, I mean real and unaffected *modesty* and *humility* ? In short,

How difficult is it, *to have regard to all God's commandments*, and *to hate every evil and false way* ? to have our duty continually in our eye, and ready to be put into practice upon every proper occasion ? to have God, and the consideration of another world always before us, present to our minds, and operative upon our practice ? to live as those that know they must die, and to have our thoughts perpetually awake, and intent upon the great and everlasting concerns of our immortal souls ?

These are great things indeed, easy to be talked of, but hard to be done ; nay, not to be done at all, without frequent and fervent prayer to God, and the continual aids and supplies of his grace ; not without an earnest endeavour on our parts, a vigorous resistance of temptations, and many a sore conflict with our own perverse wills and sensual inclinations ; not without a perpetual guard and watchfulness over our lives, and our unruly appetites and passions.

Little do unexperienced men, and those who have taken no great pains with themselves, imagine what thought and consideration, what care and attention, what resolution and firmness of mind, what diligence and *patient continuance in well-doing*, are requisite to make a truly good man ; such a one as St. Paul describes, that is, *perfect and entire, and wanting nothing* ; that *follows God fully*, and fulfils every part of his duty, *having a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man*. Who is there among us, that is either wise enough for his own direction, or good enough for the peace and satisfaction of his own mind ;

mind; that is so happy as to know his duty, and SERM.
to do it; as to have both the understanding and the XLII.
will to do in all things as he ought?

After our best care, and all our pains and endeavours, the most of us will still find a great many defects in our lives, and cannot but discern great and manifold imperfections in our very best duties and services; infomuch that we shall be forced to make the same acknowledgment concerning them, which *Solomon* does concerning the imperfection of all things under the sun; *that which is crooked cannot be made straight, and that which is wanting cannot be numbred.* And when all is done, we have all of us reason to say, not only that *we are unprofitable servants, having done nothing but what was our duty to do*; but have cause likewise, with great shame and confusion of face, to acknowledge that we have been in many respects *wicked and slothful servants*, and so very far from having done what was *our duty to do*, that the greatest part of the good which the most of us have done, is the least part of the good which we might and ought to have done.

The practice of religion, in all the parts and instances of our duty, is work more than enough for the best and greatest mind, for the longest and best ordered life, *the commandment of God is exceeding broad*; and an obedience in any good measure equal to the extent of it, extremely difficult. And after all, as the man in the Gospel said *with tears* to our Saviour, concerning the weakness of his own faith, *Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief*, Mark 9. 24. So the best of men may say, and say it with *tears* too, concerning every grace and virtue wherein they excel most, “Lord, I aspire, I endeavour after it, be thou pleased to assist my weakness, and to help me by thy grace continually to do better.”

The sum of all is this, If we be careful to do our best, and make it the constant and sincere endeavour of our lives to please God, and to keep his commandments,

SERM. XLII. ments, we shall be accepted of him : for God values this more than *whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices*, more than *thousands of rams*, and *ten thousands of rivers of oyl* ; because this is an essential part of religion, *To love God with all our hearts, and minds, and strength, and to love our neighbours as ourselves.* The duties comprehended in these two great commandments, sincerely practised by us (though with a great deal of imperfection) will certainly be acceptable in the sight of God, in and through the merits and mediation of *Jesus Christ the righteous.* *Blessed are they* (saith St. *John* very plainly, in the conclusion of that obscure book of his Revelation) *Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, Rev. 22. 14.*

I speak now to a great many who are at the upper end of the world, and command all the pleasures and enjoyments of it ; but the time is coming, and (whether we think of it or not) is very near at hand, when we shall see an end of all perfection, and of all that is desirable upon earth, and upon which men are apt to value themselves so much in this world ; and then nothing but religion, and the conscience of having done our duty to God and man, will stand us in stead, and yield true comfort to us. When we are going to leave the world, how shall we then wish that we had made religion the great business of our lives ; and in the day of God's grace and mercy, had exercised repentance, and made our peace with God, and prepared ourselves for another world ; that after our departure hence, we might be admitted into the presence of God, where is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore ?

Let no man therefore, of what rank or condition soever he be in this world, think himself too great to be good, and too wise to be religious, and to take care of his immortal soul, and his everlasting happiness in another world ; since nothing but this will approve itself to be true wisdom at the last. All other things

things will have an end with this life ; but religion and the fear of God is of a vast extent, and hath an influence upon our whole duration, and, after the course of this life is ended, will put us into the secure possession of a happiness which shall never have an end.

I will conclude this whole discourse with those words of our blessed Saviour, *If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them. Which thou, who art the eternal spring of truth and goodness, grant that we may all know and do in this our day, for thy mercies sake in Jesus Christ ; to whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, dominion and power, now and for ever. Amen.*

SERMON XLIII. *The first Sermon on this Text.*

The Nature and Influence of the Promises of the Gospel.

2 PETER i. 4.

Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious Promises ; that by these ye might be partakers of the Divine nature.

THE connexion of these words with the SERM. former is somewhat obscure, but it seems XLIII. to be this. The Apostle had in the verse before said, *that the divine power of Christ bath by the knowledge of the Gospel given us all things that pertain to life and godliness ; that is, by the knowledge of the Gospel we are furnished with all advantages which conduce to make men happy in the next life ;*

SERM. life; and religious in this; and then it follows, *where-*
 XLIII. *by are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises.*

Whereby; this seems to refer to the whole of the foregoing verse; as if it had been said, "Christ by the Gospel hath given to us all things that conduce to our future happiness; and in order thereto, all things which tend to make men holy and good." Or else *life and goodness* are, by a *Hebraism* frequent in the New Testament, put for a *godly life*. And then among all those things which conduce to a godly life, the Apostle instanceth in the *promises* of the Gospel, which do so directly tend to make men *partakers of a divine nature*.

In the handling of these words, I shall;

First, Consider the promises here spoken of; *whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises.*

Secondly, The influences which these promises ought to have upon us; *that by these ye might be made partakers of a divine nature.*

First, We will consider the promises, which are here spoken of; *whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises.* And because the chief promises of the Gospel are here intended, I shall take occasion from this text to handle the doctrine of the promises, which is frequently discoursed of in divinity, but not always so clearly stated. And to this purpose, it will be proper to take into consideration these *four* things.

I. What the promises are which are here spoken of; *whereby are given unto us promises.*

II. Why they are said to be so great and precious; *exceeding great and precious promises.*

III. We will consider the tenor of these promises.

IV. When men are said to have a right to them, so as they might apply them to themselves. These *four* heads will comprehend what I have to say upon this argument.

I. What

I. What the promises are which the Apostle here SER M. speaks of; *whereby are given unto us promises.* And, XLIII. no doubt, the Apostle here intends those great and excellent promises which Christ hath made to us in the Gospel. So that to satisfy ourselves in this enquiry, we need only to consider what are the principal promises of the Gospel. Now the great promises of the Gospel are these *three*.

1. The promise of the free pardon and forgiveness of our sins; upon our faith and repentance.

2. The promise of God's grace and holy spirit to assist our obedience.

3. The promise of eternal life to reward it.

1. The promise of pardon and forgiveness of our sins, upon our faith and repentance. The Gospel hath made full and clear promises to this purpose; that if we believe the Gospel, and will forsake our sins, and amend our wicked lives, all that is past shall be forgiven us, and that Christ died for this end, to obtain for us remission of sins in his blood. The light of nature, upon consideration of the mercy and goodness of God, gave men good hopes, that upon their repentance God would forgive their sins, and turn away his wrath from them. But mankind was doubtful of this, and therefore they used expiatory sacrifices to appease the offended Deity. The *Jewish* religion allowed of no expiation, but for legal impurities, and involuntary transgressions, such as proceeded from ignorance and inadvertency; but not for *sins of presumption*, and such as were committed *with an high hand*. If men sinned wilfully, there was no sacrifice appointed by the law for such sins. But the grace of the Gospel justifies us from the greatest sins, upon our faith and sincere repentance. So St. Paul tells the *Jews*, Acts 13. 38, 39. *Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of*

SERM. *Moses.* There was no general promise of pardon, XLIII. nor way of expiation under the law; perfect remission of sins is clearly revealed, and ascertained to us only by the Gospel.

2. Another great promise of the Gospel is the promise of God's grace, and Holy Spirit to assist our obedience. Our blessed Saviour hath promised, that *our heavenly Father will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him.* 'Tis true indeed, there was a peculiar promise of the Holy Ghost to the Apostles and Christians of the first ages, which is not now to be expected; namely, an extraordinary and miraculous power, whereby they were qualified to publish the Gospel to the world, and to give confirmation to it. But now that the christian religion is propagated and settled in the world, the great end and use of these miraculous gifts is ceased: But yet the Spirit of God doth still concur with the Gospel, and work upon the minds of men, to excite and assist them to that which is good. And though this Operation be very secret, so as we cannot give an account of the manner of it, yet the effects of it are very sensible, and this influence of God's Holy Spirit is common to all Christians in all ages of the world. This proposition is universally true, and in all ages and times; *If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

It must be acknowledged, that the Spirit doth not now work upon men in that sudden and sensible manner, as it did in the first times of christianity: because then men were strongly possess'd with the prejudices of other religions, which they had been brought up in; and therefore as more outward means of conviction were then necessary, so likewise a more powerful internal operation of the Spirit of God upon the minds of men, to concur and bear down those prejudices, and to subdue them to the obedience of faith. But now the principles of religion and goodness are more gradually instilled into the minds of men,

men, by the gentle degrees of pious instruction and SERM. education ; and with these means the Spirit of God XLIII. concurs in a more human way, which is more suited and accommodated to our reason, and offers less violence to the nature of men. So that this promise of God's Holy Spirit is now made good to us, as the necessity and circumstances of our present state do require. God does not use such extraordinary means for the producing of those effects, which may be accomplished in a more ordinary way. The assistance of God's Holy Spirit is still necessary to men, to incline and enable them to that which is good ; but not in that manner and degree that it was necessary at first : Because the prejudices against christianity are not now so great, and many of those advantages which were necessarily wanting at first, are now supplied in an ordinary way ; and therefore it is not reasonable now to expect the same extraordinary operation of the Spirit of God upon the minds of men, which we read of in the first beginning of christianity.

3. There is likewise the promise of eternal life to reward and crown our obedience. And this the scripture speaks of as the great promise of the Gospel, 1 John 2. 25. *This is the promise which he hath promised us, even eternal life.* And upon this Account, the new covenant of the Gospel is preferred before the old covenant of the law, because it is *established upon better promises.* All the special and particular promises of the law were of temporal good things, and these were the great encouragements that were given to obedience, under that imperfect dispensation : But now *godliness hath not only the promise of the life that now is, but of that which is to come ;* as the Apostle tells us ; 1 Tim. 4. 8. The Gospel hath clearly revealed to us a happy state of immortality after this life, of which men had but very obscure and doubtful apprehensions. So the Apostle tells us ; 2 Tim. 1. 10. *That it is now made mani-*

SERM. *fest, by the appearance of our Saviour Jesus Christ,*
 XLIII. *who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and im-*
 mortality to light, through the Gospel. Holy men had
 good hopes of it before ; but they had no sure, di-
 stinct apprehensions of it, no such full assurance con-
 cerning it, no such clear and express promises of it,
 as the Gospel hath given us.

Thus you see what those great promises are which
 the Gospel hath given us, namely the promise of the
 free pardon and forgiveness of our sins, upon our
 faith and repentance ; the promise of God's grace
 and Holy Spirit to assist our obedience, and the pro-
 mise of eternal life and happiness to reward it. These
 are the *three* eminent promises of the Gospel, and in
 all probability those which the Apostle here calls
great and precious promises ; which brings me to the

II^d Thing which I propounded to consider, name-
 ly, why they are said to be *exceeding great and preci-*
ous, τὰ μέγιστα καὶ τίμια ἑπ' αὐτὰ γένηται, *the greatest and the*
most valuable promises. And to satisfy us that they
 are such, the very consideration of the blessings and
 benefits that they carry in them will be sufficient:
 If we consider the condition that mankind was in,
 when God was pleased to make these gracious de-
 clarations to us, we shall see great reason to set a
 high value upon every one of these promises. Man-
 kind was extremely degenerated, *all flesh had cor-*
rupted its ways, and *the whole world was guilty before*
God, and liable to all that misery which the sinner
 had reason to apprehend from the incensed justice of
 the Almighty. We had forfeited that happiness to
 which our immortal nature was designed, and,
 which made our condition more sad, we were *with-*
out strength to recover ourselves out of it, by our re-
 pentance for what was past (if God would have ac-
 cepted of it) and by our future obedience. Now
 the promises of the Gospel offer relief to us in all
 these respects, and thereby obviate all the difficulties
 and discouragements which mankind lay under.

The

The gracious promise of pardon frees us from guilt, SERM.
and secures us from the terrible wrath of God, which XLIII.
our guilty consciences did so much dread; and with-
out this promise, mankind would have been under
the greatest doubts and discouragements. For when
men are afraid *their sins are greater than will be for-*
given them, they are apt to fall into despair, and de-
spair is an effectual bar to repentance; for when men
think their condition is desperate, they care not
what they do.

And the promise of God's grace and Holy Spirit,
to assist and enable us to do our duty, does fully an-
swer all the discouragements and objections from
our own weakness, and the power of temptation.
We may *do all things through Christ strengthening us*;
and how weak soever we are of ourselves, we are
strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. If
God be for us, who, or what can stand against us?
The devil is a very powerful enemy, and much too
strong for flesh and blood to encounter in its own
strength; but there is another principle in the world,
which is mightier and more powerful than he, the
Holy Spirit of God, who is always ready to help;
when we do not repulse and refuse his Assistance;
Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the
world, says the Apostle, *1 John 4. 4.* The Spirit
of God dwells in all those who are willing to admit
him, and is ever ready to assist those who comply
with his blessed motions, and do vigorously put
forth their own endeavours.

And then the promise of eternal life, *that* answers
all the difficulties of our obedience, and sets us a-
bove any thing that the world can threaten us with-
al, for our constancy to God, and his truth. A wise
man will be content to suffer any thing, or to quit
any thing, upon terms of far greater advantage:
And what greater consideration can be offered to
encourage our constancy and obedience, than an e-
ternity of happiness? So that the Apostle had rea-

SERM. son to call these *exceeding great and valuable promises*;
 XLIII. so valuable, that if any one of them had been want-
 ing, our redemption and recovery had either been
 absolutely impossible, or extremely difficult. I pro-
 ceed to the

III^d Thing I propounded, which was to consider the tenour of these promises; that is, whether God hath made them absolutely to us, without requiring any thing to be done on our part, or upon certain terms and conditions to be performed by us. That God may (if he please) make an absolute promise of any blessing or benefit to us, there is no doubt; and that God's grace does prevent many, and is beforehand with them, is as little to be doubted: The Spirit of God goes along with the Gospel, moving and inclining men to yield obedience to it, many times before any inclination and disposition thereto on their parts. But as to this promise of God's grace and Holy Spirit, the great question is not about the first motion of it, but the continuance of this assistance, and the encrease of it; and this, I think, may safely be affirmed, is promised only conditionally, as also the pardon of sin, and eternal life. And concerning each of these, the matter may quickly be decided, by plain texts of scripture.

Concerning the promise of the grace and assistance of God's Holy Spirit, the scripture takes notice of *two* conditions. *First*, that we beg it earnestly of God: And this our Saviour expresseth by *asking, seeking, and knocking*, which signifies the importunity of our requests; *Our heavenly Father will give his Holy Spirit to them that thus ask it*. And then, *secondly*, That we improve and make use of the grace which God affords us; *To him that bath, shall be given, and from him that bath not, shall be taken away even that which he seems to have*. That is (as appears plainly from the scope of the parable) to him that useth that grace, and those advantages which God affords him, more shall be given; but from him that makes

no use of them, and therefore is as if he had them **SERM.**
not, shall be taken away that which he but seems to **XLIII.**
have, because he makes no use of it

Concerning the pardon of sins; the scripture plainly suspends that upon the general condition of repentance, and the change of our lives; *Repent, that your sins may be forgiven you*: and upon the condition of our forgiving others; *If ye forgive men their trespasses, then will your heavenly father also forgive you; but if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your father forgive your trespasses*, says our Saviour, *Matth. 6. 14, 15.*

And then the promise of eternal life, is every where in scripture suspended upon the condition of faith and repentance, and perseverance in well doing. *He that believes* (says our Saviour) *shall be saved*, which indeed implies the whole condition of the Gospel. *He that believes*, that is, he that effectually assents to the doctrine of Christ, and is so persuaded of the truth of it, as to live according to it, *shall be saved*. But if obedience were not included in the scripture notion of faith, yet the scripture elsewhere expressly makes it the condition of our eternal salvation. *Heb. 5. 9.* Christ is there said to be *the author of eternal salvation to them that obey him*; thereby implying that none shall be saved by Christ, but those that obey the Gospel. *Heb. 12. 14.* *Follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.* *Rom. 2. 7. 8. 9.* *To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour, and immortality, God will give eternal life; but to them that are contentious, and obey not the truth* (that is, the Gospel) *but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil.*

I cannot well imagine what can reasonably be answered to such plain texts; but I will tell you what is commonly answered; namely, That God gives the condition which he requires; and therefore tho' these promises run into a conditional form, yet in

SERM. truth they are absolute ; because he that makes a pro-
 XLIII. mise to another, upon a condition which he will al-
 so perform, doth in effect make an absolute promise.
 As if a man promised another such an estate, upon
 condition he pay such a sum for it, and does pro-
 mise withal to furnish him with that sum, this in ef-
 fect amounts to an absolute promise of the estate.

And this is very well argued, if the case were
 thus. But God hath no where promised to work the
 condition in us, without the concurrence of our own
 endeavours. God may, and oftentimes doth, pre-
 vent men by his grace ; but he hath no where pro-
 mised to *give his Holy Spirit*, but to them that ask
 it of him. And he hath no where promised to con-
 tinue his grace and assistance to us, unless we will use
 our sincere endeavours ; nay, in case we do not, he
 hath threatened to take away his grace and assistance
 from us. And if this be so, then the promises of the
 Gospel do not only *seem* to be conditional, but are
really so. And it is a wonder that any man should
 doubt of this, who considers how frequently in the
 New Testament the Gospel is represented to us un-
 der the notion of a *covenant*, such a covenant in the
 very nature of it doth imply a mutual obligation be-
 tween the parties that enter into it. But if the Gos-
 pel contain only blessings which are promised on God's
 part, without any thing required to be done and
 performed on our part, in order to the obtaining of
 those blessings, then the Gospel is nothing else but a
promise, or deed of gift, making over certain benefits and
 blessings to us ; but can in no propriety of language
 in the world be called a *covenant* : But if there be
 some things required on our part, in order to our
 being made partakers of the promises which God
 hath made to us (as the scripture every where tells
 us there is) then the promises are plainly *conditional*.
 To instance in the promise of forgiveness of sins ; *re-
 pent, that your sins may be blotted out* ; that is, upon
 this condition that ye repent of your sins, they shall
 be

be forgiven; and not otherwise. Can there be any SERM.
plainer condition in the world, than this in those XLIII.
words of our Saviour? *If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly father will also forgive your trespasses; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses.*

This is so far from being any prejudice to the freeness of God's grace, who is infinitely gracious in offering such great blessings to us upon any condition that we can perform; that it were one of the absurdest things in the world to imagine that God should grant to men forgiveness of sins, and eternal life, let them behave themselves as they will.

IV. The last thing I proposed for the explaining of this doctrine of the promises of God, was to consider when men may be said to have a right to these promises, so as to be able upon good grounds to apply them to themselves: And the answer to this is very plain and easy; namely, when they find the conditions of these promises in themselves; and not till then.

When a man hath truly repented of his sins so as to forsake them, and lead a new life; and when he does from his heart forgive those that have offended him, and hath laid down all animosity against them, and thoughts of revenge; then hath he a right to the promise of pardon and forgiveness, and may apply to himself in particular what the scripture saith in general, that *God will blot out all his transgressions, and remember his iniquities no more.* When a man doth constantly and earnestly implore the assistance of God's Holy Spirit, and is ready to yield to the motions of it, and does faithfully make use of that strength and assistance which God affords him, then he may expect the continuance of his grace, and further degrees of it. When a man makes it the constant and sincere endeavour of his life, to please God, and *to walk in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameless, and is effectually taught by the*
grace

SERM. *grace of God to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and*
 XLIII. *to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present*
 world; then he may with comfort and joy wait for
the blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great
God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ; then he may with
confidence depend upon God, in sure and certain
hope of that eternal life, which God, that cannot lie,
hath promised. When he can say with St. Paul, *I*
have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I
have kept the faith, then he may likewise triumph,
 as he did, *henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of*
righteousness, which God the righteous judge shall give
me in that day.

Upon these terms, and in these cases, men may
 upon good grounds apply to themselves *these exceed-*
ing great and precious promises of the Gospel; and so
 far as any man is doubtful and uncertain of the per-
 formance of the conditions which the Gospel re-
 quires, so far we must necessarily question his right
 and title to the blessings promised. And if any man
 think this doctrine too uncomfortable, and be will-
 ing to reject it upon this account, I shall only say
 this, that men may cheat themselves, if they please,
 but most certainly they will never find any true and
 solid comfort in any other. This is a plain and sen-
 sible account of a man's confidence and good hopes in
 the promises of God; but for a man to apply any
 promise to himself, before he finds the condition in
 himself, is not *faith*, but either *fancy* or *presumption*.

And therefore it is a very preposterous course
 which many take, to advise and exhort men, with
 so much earnestness, to apply the promises of God
 to themselves, and to tell them that they are guilty
 of great unbelief in not doing it. That which is
 proper to exhort men to, is to endeavour to perform
 the condition upon which God hath promised any
 blessing to us; and when men find the condition in
 themselves, they will without any great persuasion
 take comfort from the promise, and apply it to them-

themselves; but till they discern the condition in SERM.
 themselves, it is impossible for a man that XLIII.
 understands himself, to apply the promise to him-
 self; for till the condition be performed, he hath
 no more right to the promise, than if such a pro-
 mise had never been made. And 'tis so far from be-
 ing a sin in such a man, to doubt of the benefit of
 such a promise, that it is his duty to do so; and no
 man that understands himself and the promises of
 God, can possibly do otherwise.

Therefore 'tis a vain and groundless trouble which
 perplexeth many people, that they cannot apply the
 promises of God to themselves, whereas the true
 ground of their trouble should be this, that they have
 not been careful to perform the condition of those
 promises which they would apply to themselves; the
 other is an endless trouble; let them but look to the
 condition, and the promise will apply itself. I speak
 all this on purpose to free men from those perplexi-
 ties wherewith many have entangled themselves, by
 false apprehensions of the promises of God, either as
 if they were not made to us upon certain conditions
 to be performed by us, or as if any man could com-
 fortably apply them to himself, before he hath per-
 formed those conditions upon which God hath made
 such promises. For if men will believe that which is
 not true, or expect things upon such terms as they are
 not to be had, they may trouble themselves eternally,
 and all the world cannot help it.

I have now done with the *first* thing I propound-
 ed to speak to, namely, the promises which are here
 spoken of. The *second* thing (*viz.*) what influence
 these promises ought to have upon us, *that by them*
we may be made partakers of the divine nature, I shall
 reserve to another opportunity.

The Second
Sermon on
this Text.

SERMON XLIV.

The Nature and Influence of the Promises of the Gospel.

2 PETER i. 4.

Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature.

SERM.
XLIV.

I Made entrance into these words the last day, in the handling whereof I proposed to do these two things;

First, to consider the promises here spoken of; whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises.

Secondly, The influence which these promises ought to have upon us; that by these ye might be partakers of a divine nature.

The first of these I have done with, and proceed now to the

Second, viz. The Influence which these promises ought to have upon us; whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of a divine nature. Not that we can partake of the essence and nature of God, as some have blasphemously affirmed, and pretending, in their canting and senseless language, to be *Goded with God*, and *Christed with Christ*. In this sense it is impossible for us to partake of the divine nature; for this would be for men to become Gods, and to be advanced to the state and perfection of the Deity. But the

the word *φύσις* doth frequently in scripture signify a SERM.
temper and disposition; and to be *partakers of a divine* XLIV.
nature, is to be of a *divine temper and disposition*, to
have our corrupt natures rectified and purged from
all sinful lusts, and irregular passions, and from all
vicious and corrupt affections; and therefore it fol-
lows in the text, *having escaped the corruption that is*
in the world through lust; and besides this, *giving all*
diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue know-
ledge, and to knowledge temperance and to temperance pa-
tience, and to patience godliness, and to godliness brotherly-
kindness, and to brotherly-kindness charity. So that we are
made partakers of a divine nature, as the Apostle here
explains it, these *two* ways; by cleansing ourselves from
the lust of the flesh, which the Apostle here calls the
corruption or defilement which is in the world through
lust; and by a diligent endeavour after all christian
graces and virtues, faith and temperance, and pa-
tience, a sincere love of the brethren, and an univer-
sal charity and good-will towards all men.

And that this is the proper influence and efficacy
of the great promises of the Gospel upon the hearts
and lives of men, the Apostle St. Paul fully declares
to us, 2 Cor. 7. 1. *Having therefore these promises,*
dearly beloved; let us cleanse our selves from all filthi-
ness of the flesh and spirit; that is from the lusts of the
flesh, and of uncleanness, and from all evil and corrupt
affections of the mind, such as wrath, envy, malice,
hatred, strife, revenge, cruelty, pride, and the like;
perfecting holiness in the fear of God; that is, continu-
ally aspiring still more and more after further degrees
of holiness, and virtue and goodness, which are the
great perfections of the divine nature. And thus by
a constant and sincere endeavour to *cleanse ourselves*
from all impurity of flesh and spirit, and by *practising*
all the virtues of a good life, we shall by degrees raise
and advance ourselves to a *godlike temper and disposi-*
tion, imitating in all our actions the goodness, and
mercy,

SERM. mercy, and patience, and truth, and faithfulness of
 XLIV. God, and all those other perfections of the divine
 nature, which are comprehended under the term of
holiness. This is that which the Apostle here calls
partaking of a divine nature; or, as our blessed Sa-
 viour expresth it, *to be perfect, as our Father which*
is in heaven is perfect.

This the Gospel designs to raise us to; and one of
 the great instruments whereby this is effected, are
 those *exceeding great and precious promises* which I
 have insisted upon: And they are capable of effect-
 ing it these *two* ways:

First, By way of internal efficacy and assistance;
 and,

Secondly, By way of external motive and argu-
 ment: both these ways some or other of these pro-
 mises have a mighty influence upon us (if we be not
 wanting to our selves) to raise us to a godlike temper
 and disposition, that is to the greatest perfection of
 virtue and goodness which we are capable of in this
 life.

First, by way of internal efficacy and assistance.
 And this influence the promise of God's Holy Spirit
 and of his gracious help and assistance thereof, hath
 upon the minds of men, inclining them to that which
 is good, and enabling them to do it. For the Holy
 Spirit is promised to us, in consideration and com-
 miseration of that impotency and weakness which we
 have contracted in that degenerate and depraved con-
 dition into which mankind is sunk; to help us, who
 are *without strength*, to recover ourselves out of that
 evil and miserable state into which by wilful trans-
 gression we are fallen; to *quicken us who are dead in*
trespasses and sins (as the scripture expresth the con-
 dition of unregenerate persons) to *raise us to a new*
life, and to cherish this principle of spiritual life,
 which is commonly weak at first, and to carry it
 through all discouragements and oppositions; to ex-
 cite us continually to our duty, and to enable us to
 the

the most difficult parts of obedience, such as are most SERM. contrary to our natural inclinations, and against the XLIV grain of flesh and blood; to bear down the strength of sin and temptation; and in all our conflicts with the world, the flesh and the devil, and all the powers of darkness to make us victorious over them; and in a word, to be a principle within us, more mighty and powerful than the lusts and inclinations of our evil hearts, than the most obstinate and inveterate habits of sin and vice, and than all the temptations and terrors of sense. So that if we will make use of this assistance, and lay hold of this strength which God affords us in the Gospel, and (as the Apostle expresseth it) *be workers together with God*, we need not despair of victory and success; for our strength will continually encrease, and the force and violence of our lusts will be abated, God will give us more grace, and we shall *walk from strength to strength* and *our path will be* (as Solomon says *of the way of the righteous*) *as the light which shines more and more unto the perfect day.*

For the Holy Spirit of God conducts and manageth this great work of our sanctification and salvation from the first to last, by opening our hearts to let in the light of divine truth upon our minds, by representing to us with advantage such arguments and considerations as are apt to persuade us to embrace it, and yield to it; by secret and gentle reprehensions softening our hard hearts, and bending our stiff and stubborn wills to a compliance with the will of God, and our duty. And this is that great work which the scripture calls our *regeneration* and *sanctification*, the *turning us from darkness to light*, and *from the power of satan unto God*, *a new creation*, and *a resurrection from the death of sin, to the life of holiness*. And then by leading and directing us in the ways of holiness and obedience; by quickening our devotion, and stirring up in us holy desires and dispositions of soul, rendering us fit to draw near to God in prayer,
with

SERM. with a due sense of our own wants and unworthi-
 XLIV. nefs, and an humble confidence in the goodness of
 God, that he will grant us those good things that we
 ask of him; in supporting and comforting us in all
 our afflictions and sufferings especially for truth and
 righteousness sake; and by sealing and confirming
 to us the blessed hopes of eternal life. Thus the Spi-
 rit of God carries on the work of our sanctification,
 and makes us *partakers of a divine nature*, by way of
 inward efficacy and assistance.

Secondly, The promises of the Gospel are apt like-
 wise to have a mighty influence upon us by way of
 motive and argument, to engage and encourage us
 to *cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit,*
and to perfect holiness in the fear of God. For,

First, A full pardon and indemnity for what is
 past, is a mighty encouragement for us to return to
 our duty, and a forcible argument to keep us to it
 for the future. For since God, who hath been so
 highly-injured and affronted by us, is so willing and
 ready to forgive us, as not only to provide and pur-
 chase for us the means of our pardon, by the grievous
 sufferings of his dear Son, but to offer it so freely,
 and invite us so earnestly to accept of it, and to be
 reconciled to him; the consideration of this ought
 in all reason, ingenuity and gratitude, to melt us
 into sorrow and repentance for our sins, and a deep
 sense of the evil of them, and to inflame our hearts
 with a mighty love to God, and our blessed Re-
 deemer. *who hath loved us, and washed us from our*
sins in his own blood; and to make us extremely un-
 willing, nay, most firmly resolved never more to of-
 fend that merciful and gracious God, who is so
 slow to punish, and so forward to forgive; and
 effectually to engage us to a dutiful, and constant,
 and chearful obedience to God's holy laws and com-
 mandments, lest by our wilful transgression and vio-
 lation of them, we should run our selves into a
 deeper guilt, and aggravate our condemnation.

Now

Now that by the tender mercies of our God we are **SERM.**
made whole, we should be infinitely afraid to sin any **XLIV.**
more, lest worse things come to us; lest we relapse in-
to a more incurable state, and bring a heavier load
of guilt and misery upon ourselves.

Secondly, The promise of God's grace and Holy Spirit is likewise a very powerful argument and encouragement to holiness and goodness, engaging us to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, that our souls and minds may be a fit temple for the Holy Ghost, which will not dwell in an impure soul: and likewise encouraging us hereto, by this consideration, that we have so unerring a guide to counsel and direct us, so powerful an assistant to strengthen us with all might in the inner man, to stand by us in all our conflicts with sin and satan, and make us (as the Apostle expresseth it) more than conquerors over all our spiritual enemies. For though we be weak, and our lusts strong, our enemies many, and temptations mighty and violent; yet we need not be disheartened, so long as we know that God is with us, and the grace of his Holy Spirit sufficient for us, against all the strength of sin and hell; though our duty be hard, and our strength small, yet we cannot fail of success, if we be sure that the omnipotent grace of God is always ready to second our sincere, though never so weak, endeavours. So that when we see all the enemies of our salvation drawn up in array against us, we may encourage ourselves, as the prophet *Elisha* did his servant, when he told him that an host compassed the city with horses and chariots, and said, *Alas! my master, how shall we do?* And he answered, *fear not, for they that be with us, are more than they that be with them;* 2 Kings 6. 16. Or, as *Hezekiah* comforted the people, when they were afraid of the mighty force of the King of *Assyria*, 2 Chron. 32. 7, 8. *Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there be more with*

SERM. *us than with him. With him is an arm of flesh, but*
 XLIV. *with us is the Lord our God, to help us, and to fight for*
 us.

This is the case of every Christian; the force that is against us is finite and limited; but the almighty God is on our side, and fights for us; and every one of us may say with St. Paul, Phil. 4. 13. *I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*

Thirdly, The promise of eternal life and happiness, if duly weighed and considered, hath a mighty force in it to take us off from the love and practice of sin, and to encourage our obedience, and *patient continuance in well-doing.* The assurance of enjoying unspeakable and endless happiness in another world, and of escaping extream and eternal misery, is a consideration of that weight, as one would think could not fail of its efficacy upon us, to put all temptations to sin out of countenance, and to bear down before us all the difficulties and discouragements in the way of our duty. And if this make no impresson upon us, if heaven and hell be of no weight with us, it will be in vain to use any other arguments, which, in comparison of this, are *but as the very small dust upon the balance.* For if on the one hand the hopes of perfect comfort, and joy and felicity, perpetual in duration, and vast beyond all imagination, *such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath entered into the heart of man to conceive:* and if on the other hand, the dread of the terrible wrath of God, and of the vengeance of eternal fire, together with the insupportable torments of a guilty *conscience,* and the perpetual stings of bitter remorse and anguish for the wilful folly of our wicked lives, and the rage of horrible despair of ever getting out of so miserable a state; if neither of these considerations, if both of them will not prevail upon us *to cease to be evil, and to resolve to be good,* that we may obtain one of these conditions, and may escape the other; there is no hope that any words that can be used, any arguments and considerations that can

be

be offered, should work upon us, or take place with SERM. us. He that is not to be tempted by such hopes, nor XLIV. to be terrified by such fears, is proof against all the force of persuasion in the world.

And thus I have done with the *two* things which I proposed to consider from these words; the nature of these *promises*, and the influence they are apt, and ought to have upon us, to raise us to the perfection of virtue and goodness, which the Apostle here calls our being *partakers of a divine nature*. All that now remains is, to make some useful reflections upon what hath been discoursed upon these *two* heads.

First of all, If we expect the blessings and benefits of these *exceeding great and precious promises* of the Gospel, we must be careful to perform the conditions which are indispensably required on our parts. It is a great mistake, and of very pernicious consequence to the souls of men, to imagine that the Gospel is all promises on God's part, and that our part is only to believe them, and to rely upon God for the performance of them, and to be very confident that he will make them good, though we do nothing else but only believe that he will do so. That the christian religion is only a declaration of God's good will to us, without any expectation of duty from us; this is an error which one could hardly think could ever enter into any who have the liberty to read the Bible, and do attend to what they read, and find there.

The *three* great promises of the Gospel all are very expressly contained in our Saviour's first sermon upon the mount. There we find the promise of *blessedness* often repeated; but never absolutely made, but upon certain conditions, and plainly required on our parts; as repentance, humility, righteousness, mercy peaceableness, meekness, patience. *Forgiveness of sins* is likewise promised; but only to those that make a penitent acknowledgment of them, and ask forgiveness for them, and are ready to grant that forgiveness to others, which they beg of God for themselves.

SERM. themselves. *The gift of God's Holy Spirit* is likewise
 XLIV. there promised; but it is upon condition of our earnest and importunate prayer to God. The Gospel is every where full of precepts, enjoining duty and obedience on our part, as well as of promises on God's part, assuring blessings to us; nay of terrible threatenings also if we disobey the precepts of the Gospel. St. Paul gives us the sum of the Gospel in very few and plain words, declaring upon what terms we may expect that salvation which the Gospel offers to all men, *Tit. 2. 11, 12, 13, 14.* *The grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men; teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* And then he adds, *these things speak and exhort, and rebuke with all authority;* intimating, that though men were very averse to this doctrine, it ought to be inculcated with great authority and earnestness, and those who opposed and despised it, to be severely rebuked: and with great reason, because the contrary doctrine does most effectually undermine and defeat the whole design of the christian religion.

Secondly, From hence we learn, that if the promises of the Gospel have not this effect upon us, to make us *partakers of a divine nature*, it is our own fault, and because we are wanting to our selves. God is always ready to do his part, if we do not fail in ours. There is a divine power and efficacy goes along with the Gospel, to make way for the entertainment of it in the hearts of men, where they put no bar and obstacle to it. But if men will resist the motions of God's blessed spirit, and quench the light of it, and obstinately hold out against the force of truth; God will withdraw his grace and Holy Spirit,

Spirit from them. The Gospel would raise us to SERM.
the perfection of all virtue and goodness, and the XLIV.
promises of it are admirably fitted to relieve the in-
firmities and weakness of human nature, and to *renew*
us after the image of God, in righteousness and true ho-
liness; to take us off from sin and vice, and to allure
us to goodness, and to assist and encourage us in the
practice of it: but if we will not comply with the
gracious design of God in the Gospel, and suffer
these promises to have their due influence and effica-
cy upon us; we wilfully deprive ourselves of all the
blessings and benefits of it, *we reject the counsel of*
God against ourselves, and receive the grace of God in
vain; and by rejecting and despising his promises,
we provoke him to execute his threatnings upon us.

Thirdly and lastly, If the promises of the christian
religion are apt in their own nature to work this
great effect upon us, to make us like to God, and
to bring us to so near a resemblance of the divine
perfections, to make us good, and just, and merci-
ful, and patient, and *holy in all manner of conversati-*
on, to purge us from our iniquities, and to make us a
peculiar and excellent people, zealous of good works; I
say, if this be the proper tendency of the Gospel,
and the promises of it, how doth this upbraid the
degenerate state of the christian world at this day,
which does so abound in all kind of wickedness and
impiety; so that we may cry out as he did, upon
reading the Gospel; *profecto aut hoc non est Evangelium*
; aut nos non sumus Evangelici; “ Either this is
“ not the Gospel which we read, and the christian
“ religion which we profess; or we are no Christi-
“ ans.” We are so far from that pitch of goodness
and virtue which the christian religion is apt to raise
men to, and which the Apostle here calls the *divine*
nature, that a great part of us are degenerated into
beasts and devils, wallowing in abominable and filthy
lusts, indulging ourselves in those devilish passions of
malice and hatred, of strife and discord, of revenge

and cruelty, of sedition and disturbance of the public peace to that degree, as if *the grace of God* had never *appeared* to us *to teach* us the contrary. And therefore it concerns all those who have the face to call themselves Christians, to demean themselves at another rate, and for the honour of their religion, and the salvation of their own souls, *to have their conversation as becometh the Gospel of Christ*; and by departing from the vicious practices of this present evil world, to do what in them lies to prevent the judgments of God which hang over us; or if they cannot do that, *to save themselves from this untoward generation.*

*The first
Sermon on
this Text.*

SERMON XLV.

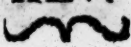
The Support of Good Men, under their
Sufferings for Religion.

■ I PETER IV. 19.

Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their Souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

SERM.
XLV.
~

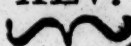
THIS epistle was written by St. Peter, who was the Apostle of the circumcision, to the dispersed Jews, who were newly converted to christianity; and the design of it is to confirm and establish them in the profession of it; and to instruct them how they ought to demean themselves toward the heathen, or gentiles, among whom they lived; and more particularly to arm and prepare them for those sufferings and persecutions, which

which he foretells would shortly overtake them for SERM.
the profession of christianity, that when they should XLV.
happen, they might not be surpris'd and startled at 
them, as if some strange and unexpected thing were
come upon them; at the 12th verse of this chapter,
beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery tryal
which is to try you; that is, do not wonder and be
not astonished at it; as if some strange thing happened
unto you.

And then he instructs them more particularly,
how they ought to behave themselves under those
tryals and sufferings, when they should happen; not
only with patience, which men ought to exercise un-
der all kinds of sufferings, upon what account and
cause soever; but with joy and chearfulness; consi-
dering the glorious example and reward of them,
ver. 13. *But rejoice, in as much as ye are partakers*
of Christ's sufferings; that when his glory shall be re-
vealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy: and at
the 14th verse he tells them, that besides the encou-
ragement of so great an example, and so glorious
a reward, they should be supported and assisted in a
very extraordinary manner by the Spirit of God
resting upon them in a glorious manner, as a testi-
mony of the divine power and presence with them;
ver. 14. *If ye be reproached for the name of Christ,*
happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth
upon you; or as it is in the best copies, for the Spirit
of glory and of power, even the Spirit of God resteth up-
on you; that is, the glorious power of the divine
Spirit is present with you, to comfort and bear up
your spirits under these sufferings. But then he cautions
them to take great care, that their sufferings be for
a good cause, and a good conscience; ver. 15. *But*
let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as
an evil-doer (that is, an offender in any kind against
human laws, made to preserve the peace and good
order of the world) *or as a busy body in other mens*
matters; that is, as a pragmatistical person, that

SERM. meddles out of his own sphere, to the disquiet and
 XLV. disturbance of human society; for to suffer upon any
 of these accounts, would be matter of shame and
 trouble, but not of joy and comfort; but if they
 suffered upon account of the profession of christianity,
 this would be no cause of shame and reproach to
 them; but they ought rather to give God thanks for
 calling them to suffer in so good a cause, and upon
 so glorious an account, v. 16. *Yet if any man suffer
 as a Christian (if that be his only crime) let him not
 be ashamed, but let him glorify God on this behalf; for
 the time is come, that judgment must begin at the house
 of God; that is, the wise and just providence of God,
 hath so ordered it at this time, for very good rea-
 sons and ends, that the first calamities and sufferings
 should fall upon Christians, the peculiar people and
 church of God, for their trial, and a testimony of
 the truth of that Religion, which God was now
 planting in the world: And if it first begin at us (that
 is, at us Jews, who were the ancient people of God,
 and have now embraced and entertained the revela-
 tion of the Gospel) what shall the end be of them, that
 obey not the Gospel of Christ? (That is, how much
 more severely will God deal with the rest of the
 Jews who have crucified the Son of God and still
 persist in their infidelity and disobedience to the
 Gospel?) And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where
 shall the ungodly and sinner appear? (That is, if good men
 be saved with so much difficulty, and must through
 so many tribulations enter into the kingdom of God, what
 will become of all ungodly and impenitent sinners?
 where shall they appear? how shall they be able to
 stand in the judgment of the great day?) From the
 consideration of all which, the Apostle makes this
 inference or conclusion, in the last verse of this chap-
 ter, wherefore let them that suffer according to the
 will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in
 well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.*

Thus

Thus you see the connexion and dependance of SERM.
these words upon the Apostle's foregoing discourse. XLV.
I shall explain the several expressions in the text, 
and then handle the main points contained in them.

The expressions to be explained are these: What is meant by *those that suffer according to the will of God*; what by *committing the keeping of our souls to God, as unto a faithful Creator*; and what by *well-doing*.

First, What is meant by *suffering according to the will of God*. This may be understood by suffering in a good cause, such as God will approve; but this is not so probable, because this is mentioned afterwards, in the following expressions of *committing the keeping of our souls to God in well-doing*; that is, in suffering upon a good account: And therefore the plain and genuine sense of this expression seems to be this; that those who, according to the good pleasure of God's will, and the wise dispensation of his providence, are appointed to suffer for his cause, should demean themselves so and so: *let them that suffer according to the will of God*; that is, those whom God thinks fit to call to suffering. And this agrees very well with the like expression, *chap. 3. of this epistle, v. 17. For it is better if the will of God be so* (that is, if God hath so appointed it, and think it fit) *that ye suffer for well-doing, than for evil-doing*.

Secondly, What is here meant by *committing the keeping of our souls to God, as to a faithful Creator*. That is, to deposit our lives, and all that belongs to us, in a word, ourselves, in the hands and custody of his merciful care and providence who made us, and therefore we may be sure will faithfully keep what we commit to him: For as we are his creatures, he is engaged to take care of us, and will not abandon the work of his own hands. Besides that he hath promised to be more especially concerned for good men, to support them in their sufferings for
a good

SERM. a good cause, and to reward them for it; *and he is XLV. faithful that hath promised.*

And therefore there is great reason and great encouragement, in all our sufferings for God's cause and truth, to commit our souls to his care and custody: our souls, that is (as I said before) our lives, and all that belongs to us; in a word, ourselves: for so the word *soul* is frequently used both in the Old and New Testament; *Psal. 7. 5. Let the enemy persecute my soul, and take it: that is, my life; for so it follows in the next words; yea let him tread down my life upon the earth. And Psal. 54. 3. Oppressors seek after my soul. And Psal. 59. 3. They lie in wait for my soul; that is, my life. And Psal. 16. 10. Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, my soul, that is, myself; thou wilt not suffer me to continue in the grave, and under the power of death, but wilt raise me up to life again. And so likewise in the New Testament, Mar. 8. 35. Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the Gospel's, the same shall save it. The same word which is here rendered life, in the very next verse is rendered soul: For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? that is, his life. And so likewise, Job. 12. 25. He that loveth his life, shall lose it: and he that hateth his life in this world (in the original the word signifies soul) He that hateth his life in this world (that is, who neglecteth and exposeth his life in this world, for the sake of Christ) shall keep it unto life eternal. And Luke 9. 25. that which the other Evangelist renders by the word *soul*, or *life*, he renders *himself*; for what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world and lose himself? and so here in the text, to commit the keeping of our souls to God, is to commit ourselves to his care and providence.*

Thirdly, What is here meant by *committing ourselves to him in well-doing*: By *well-doing* is here meant, a fixed purpose and resolution of doing our duty, notwithstanding

withstanding all hazards and sufferings; which is SERM. called by St. Paul, Rom. 2. 7. *a patient continuance XLV. in well-doing.* It signifies sometimes acts of goodness and charity; but in this epistle it is taken in a larger sense, for constancy and resolution in the doing of our duty; as chap. 2. 15. *For so is the will of God, that with well doing* (that is, by a resolute constancy in a good course) *ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.* And ver. 20. *But if when ye do well, and suffer for it;* (that is, if when ye suffer for well-doing) *ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.* And chap. 3. ver. 6. *As long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement;* that is, are resolute and constant in doing your duty, notwithstanding all threatnings and terrors. And ver. 17. *For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well-doing, than for evil-doing;* that is, for your religion and constancy in so good a cause, as Christians, and not as criminals upon any other account.

So that the plain meaning of the words is, as if the Apostle had said, wherefore being forewarned of suffering and persecution for the cause of religion, the sum of my direction and advice upon the whole matter is this; that since it is the will of God that ye should suffer upon this account, commit yourselves, in the constant discharge of your duty, and a good conscience, to the particular care and providence of Almighty God, and your faithful Creator.

And now I come to handle the particular points contained in the words; and they are these *three.*

First, That when men do suffer really and truly for the cause of religion, they may with confidence commit themselves (their lives and all that is dear to them) to the particular and more especial care of the divine providence.

Secondly, Always provided, that we do nothing contrary to our duty, and a good conscience; for this the Apostle means, *by committing ourselves to God, in well-doing.* If we step out of the way of our duty,
or

SERM. or do any thing contrary to it, God's providence
 XLV. will not be concerned for us, to bear us out in such
 sufferings.

Thirdly, I shall consider what ground of comfort and encouragement the consideration of God, as a *faithful Creator*, affords to us in all our sufferings for a good cause, and a good conscience.

First, When men do suffer really and truly for the cause of religion, and God's truth, they may with confidence and good assurance commit themselves (their lives and all that is dear to them) to the particular and more especial care of his providence. In the handling of this, I shall consider these *three* things.

I. When men may be said to suffer really and truly for the cause of religion; and when not.

II. How far they may rely upon the providence of God, to bear them out in these sufferings.

III. What ground and reason there is to expect the more particular and especial care of God's providence, in case of such sufferings.

I. When men may be said to suffer really and truly for the cause of religion, and God's truth; and when not. In these cases,

First, When men suffer for not renouncing the true religion, and because they will not openly declare against it, and apostatize from it. But it will be said, that in all these cases the question is, What is the true religion? To which I answer; that all discourses of this nature, about suffering for religion? do suppose the truth of some religion or other. And among Christians, the truth of the christian religion is taken for granted, wherever we speak of mens suffering persecution for it. And the plainest case among Christians, is, when they are persecuted, because they will not openly deny and renounce the christian religion. And this was generally the case of the primitive Christians; they were threatned with tortures and death, because they would not renounce Jesus Christ, and his religion, and give demonstra-

monstration thereof, by offering sacrifices to the heathen Gods.

SERM.
XLV.

Secondly, Men do truly suffer for the cause of religion, when they are persecuted, only for making an open profession of the christian religion by joining in the assemblies of Christians for the worship of God; though they be not urged to deny and disclaim it, but only to conceal and dissemble the profession of it, so as to forbear the maintenance and defence of it upon fitting occasions, against the objections of those who are adversaries of it. For to conceal the profession of it, and to decline the defence of it when just occasion is offered, is *to be ashamed of it*, which our Saviour interprets to be a kind of *denial* of it, and is opposed to *the confessing of him before men*, Matth. 10. 32, 33. *Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father which is in heaven: But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.* And this by St. Mark is expressed by *being ashamed of Christ*; that is, afraid and ashamed to make an open profession of him, and his religion; Mark 8. 38. *Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy Angels.*

And this likewise was the case of the primitive Christians under the moderate emperors, when the persecution of them was not so hot, as to drive them to a denial of Christ, provided they would be contented to conceal and dissemble their religion, in that case they did not hunt them out, nor persecute them to renounce their religion, if they made no discovery of themselves. But yet they who suffered, because they would not conceal their profession of christianity, did truly suffer for the cause of religion.

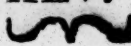
Thirdly, Men do likewise truly suffer for the cause of religion, when they suffer for not betraying it, by any indirect and unworthy means; such as among

SERM. the primitive Christians was the delivering up their
 XLV. Bibles to the heathen, to be burnt and destroyed by
 them: For to give up that holy book, which is the
 great instrument of our religion, is in effect to give
 up christianity itself and consent to the utter extir-
 pation of it.

And such likewise is the case of those, who suffer in any kind for not contributing to break down the fences of religion in any nation, where the providence of God hath given it a legal establishment and security; or, in a word, for refusing to countenance and further any design, which visibly tends to the ruin of religion: For to destroy religion, and to take away that which hinders the destruction of it, are in effect much the same thing.

Fourthly, Men do truly suffer for the cause of religion, when they suffer for the maintenance and defence of any necessary and fundamental article of it, though they be not required to renounce the whole christian religion: for what *St. Paul* says of the article of *the resurrection of the dead*, is true of any other necessary article of the christian religion, that the denial of it is a subversion of the whole christian faith; because it tends directly to the overthrowing of christianity, being a wound given to it in a vital and essential part. And this was the case of those, who in any age of christianity have been persecuted by *Hereticks*, for the defence of any article of christianity.

And I cannot but observe by the way, that after the heathen persecutions were ceased, persecution was first begun among the Christians by *Hereticks*; and hath since been taken up, and carried much beyond that bad pattern, by the church of *Rome*; which, besides a standing *inquisition* in all countries, which are entirely of that religion (a court, the like where-to, for the clancular and secret manner of proceeding, for the unjust and arbitrary rules of it, for the barbarous usage of mens persons, and the cruelty
 of

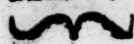
of its torments, to extort confessions from them, SERM.
 the sun never saw erected under any government in XLV.
 the world, by men of any religion whatsoever) I say, 
 which, besides this court, hath by frequent *Croisades*
 for the extirpation of hereticks, and by many
 bloody *massacres* in *France* and *Ireland*, and several
 other places, destroyed far greater numbers of *Christians*,
 than all the ten heathen persecutions; and
 hath of late revived, and to this very day continues
 in the same or greater cruelties, and a fiercer perse-
 cution of protestants, if all the circumstances of it
 be considered, than was ever yet practised upon
 them; and yet whilst this is doing almost before our
 eyes, in one of our next neighbour nations, they
 have the face to complain of the cannibal laws and
 bloody persecutions of the church of *England*, and
 the confidence to set up for the great patrons of li-
 berty of conscience, and enemies of all compulsion
 and force in matters of religion.

Fifthly, Men do truly suffer for the cause of God
 and religion, when they suffer for asserting and
 maintaining the purity of the christian doctrine and
 worship; and for opposing and not complying with
 those gross errors and corruptions, which superstition
 and ignorance had, in a long course of time, brought
 into the christian religion. Upon this account many
 good people suffered in many past ages, for resisting
 the growing errors and corruptions of the church of
Rome, which at first crept in by degrees, but at last
 broke in like a mighty flood, which carried down
 all before it, and threaten'd ruin and destruction to
 all that opposed them. Upon this account also, in-
 finite numbers suffered among the *Waldenses* and *Al-*
bigenes, in *Bohemia*, and in *England*, and in most
 other countries in this *western* part of christendom.
 And they who suffered upon this account, suffered
 in a good cause, and for the testimony of the
 truth.

Sixthly,

SERM.

XLV.



Sixthly, and *lastly*, Men do truly suffer for the cause of religion, when they suffer for not disclaiming and renouncing any clear and undoubted truth of God whatsoever; yea though it be not a fundamental point and article of religion.

And this is the case of those many thousands, who ever since the IVth council of *Lateran*, which was in the year 1215 (when *Transubstantiation* was first defined to be an article of faith, and necessary to salvation to be believed) were persecuted with fire and sword, for not understanding those words of our Saviour, *this is my Body* (which are so easily capable of a reasonable sense) in the absurd and impossible sense of *Transubstantiation*. And though this disowning of this doctrine, be no express and direct article of the christian religion; yet it is a fundamental article of right reason and common sense: because the admitting of *Transubstantiation*, does undermine the foundation of all certainty whatsoever, and does more immediately shake the very foundation of christianity itself. Yea, though the christian religion were no ways concerned in this doctrine, yet out of reverence to reason and truth, and a just animosity and indignation at confident nonsense, a man of an honest and generous mind, would as soon be brought to declare or swear, that twice two do not make four, but five, as to profess his belief of *Transubstantiation*.

And though all truths are not of equal consequence and concernment, yet all truth is of God; and for that reason, though we are not obliged to make an open profession of all truths at all times, yet we are bound not to deny or renounce any truth, nor to make profession of a known falshood or error: for it is merely because of the intrinsical evil of the thing, that *it is impossible for God to lie*; and the Son of God thought it worth his coming into the world, and laying down his life, *to bear witness to the truth*. So he himself tells us, *John 18. 37. To this end*

was

was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth.

SERM.

XLV.

Thus have I shewn you in these plain instances (to which most other cases may be reduced) when men may be said to suffer truly for the cause of religion, and truth.

I shall mention two or three cases wherein men may seem to suffer for the cause of religion, but cannot truly be said to do so.

First, When men rashly expose themselves to danger, and run upon sufferings for the sake of religion. Thus several of the primitive Christians voluntarily exposed themselves when they were not called in question, and in the heat of their affection and zeal for God and religion, offered themselves to martyrdom, when none enquired after them. This, in the gracious interpretation of God, who knowing the sincerity of their zeal, was pleased to overlook the indiscrete forwardness and rashness of it, might be accepted for a kind of *martyrdom*; but cannot in reason be justified, so as to be fit to be made a pattern, and to be recommended to our imitation. For though God may be pleased to excuse the weakness of a well-meaning zeal: yet he can approve nothing but what is reasonable.

To suffer chearfully for the cause of God and his truth, when he calls us *to fight this good fight of faith*, and *to resist unto blood*; and when we are reduced to that strait, that we must either die for God and his truth, or deny them; to suffer, I say, in this case with courage and patience, is one of the noblest of all the christian virtues. But to be perfect volunteers, and to run ourselves upon sufferings, when we are not called to them, looks rather like *the sacrifice of fools*; which though God may mercifully excuse, and pardon the evil of the action, for the good meaning of it; yet he can never perfectly approve and accept of it. But I think there is little need now-a-days to caution men against this rashness; it is well

SERM. if they have the grace and resolution to suffer when
 XLV. it is their duty, and when they are called to it.

Secondly, Nor can men be truly said to suffer for the cause of religion, when they suffer not for their faith, but their fancy, and for the wilful and affected error of a mistaken conscience. As when men suffer for indifferent things, which in heat and passion they call *Superstition* and *Idolatry*; and for their own false opinions in religion, which they mistake for *fundamental articles* of the christian faith. In this case, their mistake about these things will not change the nature of them, nor turn their sufferings into martyrdom; and yet many men have certainly suffered for their own mistakes. For as men may be so far deluded, *as to think they do God good service, when they kill his faithful servants*; so likewise may they be so far deceived, as to sacrifice their lives, and all that is dear to them, to their own culpable errors and mistakes. But this is zeal without knowledge, not *the wisdom which descends from above*, but that which comes from beneath, and is like the fire of hell, which is heat without light.

Thirdly and lastly, nor can men truly be said to suffer for the cause of God and religion, when they suffer for the open profession and defence of truths not necessary. For though a man be obliged to make an open profession of all *fundamental* and *necessary truths*; yet he is under no such obligation to make profession of truths *not necessary* at all times; and unless he be called to deny them, he is not bound either to declare or defend them; he may hold his peace at other times, and be silent about them, especially when the open profession of them will probably do no good to others, and will certainly do hurt to ourselves, and the zealous endeavour to propagate such truths will be to the greater prejudice of charity, and the disturbance of the publick peace of the church.

It

It was a good saying of *Erasmus* (if we understand SERM. it as I believe he meant it, of truths not necessary) XLV.

adeo invisæ sunt mihi discordiæ, ut veritas etiam contentiosa displiceat: I am (says he) *so perfect a hater of discord, that I am even displeased with truth, when it is the occasion of contention.* As a man is never to deny truth, so neither is he obliged to make an open profession of truths not necessary at all times; and if he suffer upon that account, he cannot justify it to his own prudence, nor have comfort in such sufferings; because he brings them needlessly upon himself; and no man can have comfort, but in suffering for doing his duty.

And thus I have done with the *first* thing I proposed to enquire into; namely, when men may be truly said to suffer for the cause of religion.

I proceed now to the

II^d Enquiry; namely, how far men may rely upon the providence of God, to bear them out in such sufferings?

To which I answer; That provided we do what becomes us, and is our duty on our part, the providence of God will not be wanting on his part, to bear us out in all our sufferings for his cause, one of these *three* ways.

First, to secure us from that violent degree of temptation and suffering, which would be too strong for human strength and patience; Or,

Secondly, In case of such extraordinary temptation and tryal, to give us the extraordinary supports and comforts of his Holy Spirit; or else,

Thirdly, In case of a temporary fall and miscarriage, to raise us up by repentance, and a greater resolution and constancy under sufferings. I shall speak severally to these.

First, Either the providence of God will not be wanting to secure us from that violent degree of temptation and suffering, which would be too strong for human strength and patience to bear. And this

SERM. is a great security to good men, against the fears of
 LV. final miscarriage, after all their labours, and pains, and
 sufferings in a religious course, by being over-born
 at last by the assault of a very violent and powerful
 temptation. Not but that the best of men ought al-
 ways to have a prudent distrust of themselves, so as
 to keep them from security; according to the Apost-
 le's caution and counsel; *be not high-minded, but
 fear*; and *let him that stands, take heed lest he fall*;
 because till we come to heaven, we shall never be
 out of the danger and possibility of falling; but yet
 for all this, we may hope, by the sincerity and firm-
 ness of our resolution, under the usual influences of
 God's grace, to *acquit ourselves like men*, in ordinary
 cases of temptation and suffering.

And to this end, we should represent to ourselves
those exceeding great and precious promises, which he
 hath made to good men, and his merciful provi-
 dence, which continually watcheth over them, and
 steers their course for them in this world, among
 those many rocks, which they are in danger to split
 upon; that he is able *to establish us in the truth*, and
 to keep us from falling, *to present us faultless before
 the presence of his glory with exceeding joy*, and to pre-
 serve us *to his heavenly kingdom*; and that if we do
 not forsake him, and forfeit his care and protection,
 he will keep us *by his mighty power through faith unto
 salvation*; either by his merciful foresight and pre-
 vention of those temptations which would probably
 be too hard for us; or if he thinks fit they should be-
 fal us, by supporting us under them in an extraordi-
 nary manner.

For I doubt not, but that the best men do owe
 their security and perseverance in goodness, much
 more to the merciful providence of God, prevent-
 ing the assaults of violent and dangerous temptations,
 than to the firmness and constancy of their own reso-
 lutions. For there are very few persons of so firm and
 resolute virtue, but that one time or other a tempta-
 tion

tion might assault them upon such a disadvantage, **SERM.**
as would in all probability, not only stagger them, **XLV.**
but bear them down. Now herein the providence
of God towards good men is very remarkable, in
securing them from those temptations which are too
strong for them to grapple withal; like a kind and
tender father, who, if he be satisfied of the dutiful
disposition of his child towards him, will not try
his obedience to the utmost, nor permit too strong a
temptation to the contrary to come in his way. So
the *Psalmist* represents God's tender regard and con-
sideration of the frailty and infirmity of his children,
Psal. 103. 13, 14. Like as a father pitieth his chil-
dren, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him: For he
knoweth our frame, he remembreth that we are but dust;
that is, he considereth us as men, and deals with us
accordingly. Provided we be sincere, he will not
suffer us to be set upon by temptations that are too
big for us. And therefore our blessed Saviour makes
it one of the petitions of that excellent prayer, which
he hath recommended to us; *Lead us not into temp-*
tation; that is, we should every day beg of God,
that his providence would keep us out of the way of
great and dangerous temptations, as knowing that
this will be a greater security to us, than any strength
and resolution of our own.

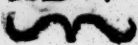
Secondly, Or in case of such violent and extraordi-
nary temptations, the providence of God will not
be wanting to give us the extraordinary support and
comfort of his Holy Spirit, to bear us up under
them. The providence of God did take care of
good men in all ages, and did afford comfort to
them under great tryals and sufferings; but God ne-
ver made so express and general a promise of this,
to all good men, as he hath done by the christian
religion. Never was so constant a presence and in-
fluence of the divine Spirit vouchsafed and assured to
men under any dispensation, as that of the Gospel;
wherein the Spirit of God is promised to all that sin-

SERM. XLV. cerely embrace the christian religion, to reside and dwell in them; not only to all the purposes of sanctification and holiness, but of support and comfort under the heaviest pressures and sufferings. For which reason the *Gospel* is called *the ministration of the Spirit*; and is upon this account said to be *more glorious* than any other revelation which God had ever made to mankind.

We are naturally apt to be very much disheartened and cast down at the apprehension of great sufferings, from the consideration of our own weakness and frailty; but the Spirit of Christ dwells in all true Christians, and the same glorious power, which raised up Jesus from the dead, works mightily in them that believe. St. Paul useth very high expressions about this matter, *Eph. 1. 19. That ye may know* (saith he, speaking to all Christians) *what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power; which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand.* So that every Christian is endowed with a kind of *omnipotence, being able* (as St. Paul speaks of himself) *to do and to endure all things, through Christ strengthening him.* Of ourselves we are very weak, and the temptations and terrors of the world are very powerful; but there is a principle residing in every true Christian that is able to bear us up against the world, and the power of all its temptations. *Whatsoever is born of God* (saith St. John) *overcometh the world; for greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* The Holy Spirit of God which dwells in all true Christians is a more powerful principle of resolution, and courage, and patience, under the sharpest trials and sufferings, than the evil spirit which rules in the world is, to stir up, and set on, the malice and rage of the world against us. *Ye are of God, little children;* (he speaks this to the youngest and weakest Christians) *Ye are of God, little children, and have*
over-

overcome, because greater is he that is in you, than he SERM.
 that is in the world. The malice and power of the XLV.
 devil is very great; but the goodness and power of
 God is greater. And therefore in case of extraor-
 dinary temptation, good men, by virtue of this pro-
 mise of God's Holy Spirit, may expect to be born
 up and comforted in a very extraordinary and super-
 natural manner, under the greatest tribulations and
 sufferings for righteousness sake.

And this was in a very signal and remarkable
 manner afforded to the primitive Christians, under
 those fierce and cruel persecutions to which they
 were exposed. And this may still be expected, in
 like cases of extraordinary sufferings for the testimo-
 ny of God's truth. *If ye be reproached (saith St. Pe-*
ter in this 4th chap. ver. 14.) for the name of Christ,
happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth
upon you. The Spirit of God is here promised to
 strengthen and support all that suffer for the name of
 Christ, in a very conspicuous and glorious manner,
 according to that prayer of St. Paul, Col. 1. 11.
 that Christians might be *strengthened with all might,*
according to God's glorious power, unto all patience and
long-suffering, with joyfulness. For when God is
 pleased to exercise good men with trials more than
 human, and such sufferings as are beyond the com-
 mon rate of human strength and patience to bear,
 he hath engaged himself to endue and assist them
 with more than human courage and resolution. So
 St. Paul tells the *Corinthians*, who had then felt the
 utmost rage of persecution, 1 Cor. 10. 13. *No temp-*
tation or trial hath yet befallen you but what is common
to man; that is, nothing but what is frequently in-
 cident to human nature, and what by human strength,
 with an ordinary assistance of God's grace, may be
 grappled withal. *But, in case God shall call you to*
extraordinary sufferings, he is faithful that hath pro-
mitted, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that
ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a

SERM. *way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it; that is,*
 XLV. *as he hath ordered and appointed so great a tempta-*
 *tion or trial to befall you, so he will take care that it*
shall have a happy issue, by enabling you to bear it,
by affording you grace and strength equal to the vio-
lence and power of the temptation. For as he is said
to fall into temptation, that is conquered by it; so he
is said to get out of it, or escape it, who is enabled to
bear it, and, in so doing, gets the better of it. And
for this we may rely upon the faithfulness of God,
who hath promised that we shall not be tried above
our strength; either not above the strength which we
have, or not above the strength which he will afford
us in such a case.

And why then should we be daunted at the apprehension of any suffering whatsoever, if we be secured that our comfort shall be increased in proportion to our trouble, and our strength in proportion to the sharpness and weight of our sufferings? or else,

Thirdly, In case of temporary falling, the providence and goodness of God will give them the grace and opportunity of recovering themselves from their fall by repentance. For the providence of God may sometimes, for wise ends and reasons, see it fit to leave good men to their own frailty, and to faint and fall shamefully under sufferings, so as to renounce and deny the truth; sometimes to punish their vain confidence in themselves, as in the case of *Peter*, who declared more resolution, and bore it out with a greater confidence than any of the disciples, when he said to our Saviour, *though all men forsake thee, yet will not I*; and yet after this he fell more shamefully than any of the rest, so as to deny his master with horrid oaths and imprecations, and *this*, though our Saviour had prayed particularly for him, *that his faith might not fail*. From which instance we may learn, that God doth not engage himself absolutely to secure good men from falling, in case of a great temptation and trial; but if they be sincere, he

he will not permit them to fall finally, though he SERM.
may suffer them to miscarry grievously for a time, to XLV.
convince them of the vanity of their confidence in
themselves and their own strength.

Sometimes God may suffer good men to fall, in order to their more glorious recovery, and the greater demonstration and triumph of their faith and constancy afterwards, which was the case of that happy instrument of our reformation here in *England*, archbishop *Cranmer*, who after he had been so great a champion of the reformation, was so overcome with fear, upon the apprehension of his approaching sufferings, as to subscribe those errors of the church of *Rome*, which he had so stoutly opposed a great part of his life: But he did not long continue in this state, but by the grace of God, which had not forsaken him, was brought to repentance; and when he came to suffer, gave such a testimony of it, and of his faith and constancy, as was more glorious, and more to the confirmation of the faith of others, than a simple martyrdom could have been, if he had not fallen; for when he was brought to the stake he put his right hand (with which he had signed the recantation) into the fire, and with an undaunted constancy held it there, till it was quite burnt, for a testimony of his true repentance for that foul miscarriage; and when he had done, gave the rest of his body to be burnt, which he endured with great courage and cheerfulness to the last. So that he made all the amends possible for so great a fault; and the goodness of God, and the power of his grace was more glorified in his repentance and recovery, than if he had never fallen.

But what shall we say, when, notwithstanding these promises of extraordinary comfort and support, in case of extraordinary sufferings, so great numbers are seen to faint in the day of trial, and to fall off from their steadfastness? Of which there were many sad instances, among the primitive Christians, and
have

SERM. have likewise been of late in our own times, and in
 XLV. places nearer to us. This I confess is a very melancholy consideration, but yet I think is capable of a sufficient answer.

And *first* of all, let this be established for a firm and undoubted principle, *that God is faithful to his promise*; and therefore we ought much rather to suppose in all these cases, that there is some default on our part, than any failure and unfaithfulness on God's part. Thus St. *Paul* determines in a like case, when the promise of God seemed not to be made good to the *Jews*, he lays the blame of it on their unbelief, but acquits God of any unfaithfulness in his promise, *Rom. 3. 3, 4. For what if some did not believe, shall their unbelief make the faith (or fidelity) of God without effect? God forbid: Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar.* This I confess does not answer the difficulty; but yet it ought to incline and dispose us to interpret what can fairly be offered for the removal of it, with all the favour that may be on God's side. I say then,

Secondly, That when good men fall in case of extraordinary temptation, and recover again by repentance, and give greater demonstration afterwards of their constancy and resolution, in the cause of God and his truth, the faithfulness of God in his promises is sufficiently vindicated, as in the cases I mentioned; because the promise of God is not absolute, that good men shall be preserved from falling; but that *the temptation shall have a happy issue*, and that they shall not *finally* miscarry. For promises of this nature are to be interpreted by us, and understood as we do our Saviour's prayer for *Peter* before his fall, *that his faith should not fail finally*; but though he fell through too much confidence in himself, he should through the grace of God assisting him be enabled to recover by repentance.

Thirdly, The sincerity or insincerity of men in the profession of the true religion, is a thing which we
 cannot

cannot certainly know, because we do not see into SERM.
 mens hearts; but *he who knows the heart, and tries* XLV.
the spirits of men in a balance, cannot be deceived in
 this matter; and where men are not sincere, the
 promise of God is not concerned to hinder them
 from discovering themselves; and the fall of such
 persons is no reflection upon the faithfulness of God.
 And it is reasonable enough to presume, that this
 may be the case of not a few, and that (like *Simon*
Magus) after they have made a very solemn profes-
 sion of christianity, *their hearts may not be right in*
the sight of God.

Fourthly, If we put the case at the hardest, that
 some that were very sincere, after they have held out
 a great while, under the extremity of torments, have
 at last fainted under them, and yielded to the malice
 and cruelty of their persecutors, and in this amaze-
 ment and distraction have not long after expired,
 without any testimony of their repentance: In this
 case, both reason and charity ought to restrain us from
 passing any very positive and severe sentence upon the
 state of such persons. For what do we know, but God,
 whose goodness will certainly make all the allowance
 to human frailty that reason can require; (*for he*
knows whereof we are made; and remembers that we
are but dust; he mercifully considers every man's
 case, and weighs all the circumstances of it in an
 exact balance;) I say, who can tell, but that in such
 a case as I have mentioned, God may graciously be
 pleased to accept such a degree of constant suffering
 of great torments for so long a time, for a true
martyrdom, and not expect a more than human
 patience and resolution, where he is not pleased to
 afford more than human strength and support; and
 whether he may not look upon their failing and mis-
 carriage at last, in the same rank with the indeliberate
 actions of men in a frenzy, and besides themselves?

And thus God may be said *with the temptation to*
make a way to escape, or to give a happy issue to it;
 since

SERM. since they were *enabled to bear it*, 'till being distract-
 XLV. ed by their torments, their understandings were
 ~~~~~ thrown off the hinges, and incapable of exercising  
 any deliberate acts of reason. And without some  
 such equitable consideration of the case of such per-  
 sons, it will be very hard to reconcile some appear-  
 ances of things with the goodness of God, and the  
 faithfulness of his promise.

However, it will become us to abstain from all  
 uncharitableness and peremptory censure of the final  
 estate of such persons, especially till we ourselves have  
 given greater and better testimony of our constancy;  
 and in the mean time, to leave them to the righte-  
 ous and merciful sentence of *their* master and *ours*,  
 to whose judgment we must all stand or fall.

I am sure it will very ill become those, who by  
 the providence of God have escaped those sufferings,  
 and are at present out of danger themselves, to sit in  
 judgment upon those who are left to endure this ter-  
 rible conflict, and have perhaps held out as long, or  
 longer, than they themselves would have done in the  
 like circumstances. Let us rather earnestly beg of  
*the God of all grace and patience*, that he would indue  
 us with a greater measure of patience and constancy,  
 if he see fit to call us to the exercise of it, and (which  
 we lawfully may, after the example of our blessed  
 Saviour) *that if it be his will, he would let this cup*  
*pass from us*, and not try us with the like sufferings, *lest*  
*we also be weary, and faint in our minds*. I come  
 now to the

III. And last enquiry which I proposed; What  
 ground and reason there is, for good men to expect  
 the more peculiar and especial care of God's provi-  
 dence in case of such sufferings.

The providence of God extends to all his creatures,  
 according to that of the Psalmist, *the Lord is good*  
*to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works*.  
 But he exerciseth a more particular providence to-  
 wards mankind; and more peculiar yet towards those  
 who

who study to please him, by obeying his laws and doing his will. He that is assured of his own heart, that he loves God, and would do or suffer any thing for him, can have no cause to doubt but that God loves him, and is concerned for his happiness. No man was ever afraid of God, that was not conscious to himself that he had offended him, and by the wilful breach of his laws had put himself out of the care of his providence. But on the contrary, if our hearts give us this testimony, that we have made it our sincere endeavour to please him, we are naturally apt to have good assurance and confidence of his favour and good-will towards us. This comfort the mind of every good man is apt to give him, from his own reason, and the natural notions which he hath of God.

But to free us from all doubt in this matter, God himself hath told us so, and given us plentiful assurance of it in his word. *Psal. 11. 7. The righteous Lord loveth righteousness, his countenance doth behold the upright*; that is, he will be favourable unto them. *Psal. 33. 18. Behold the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him; upon them that hope in his mercy. The eye of God signifies his watchful care and providence over good men.* So that besides the sure and well-grounded reasonings, from the essential perfections of the divine nature, the mercy and goodness of God; we have a more sure word of promise, in the express declarations of God's word, and more particularly in the case of great temptations and sufferings. For can we think, that the scripture saith in vain, *Wait on the Lord, and be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart? Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the lord delivereth him out of all? The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and he delighteth in his ways; though he fall, he shall not utterly be cast down, for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand? The salvation of the righteous cometh of the Lord, he is their help in time of trouble?*

The

SERM.

XLV.

The same promises we find in the New Testament. *All things shall work together for good, to them that love God. God is faithful, who hath promised, that he will not suffer you to be tempted above what ye are able, but will with the temptation make a way to escape.* And to mention no more; *hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering, he is faithful that hath promised, viz. to support you under sufferings, and to reward them.*

Thus much for the *first* point, namely, that when men do suffer truly for the cause of religion, they may with confidence commit themselves to the more peculiar care of the divine providence.

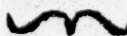
*The Second  
Sermon on  
this Text.*

## SERMON XLVI.

The Support of Good Men, under their  
Sufferings for Religion.

\* I P E T E R 4. 19.

*Wherefore let them that suffer according to the Will of God, commit the keeping of their Souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.*

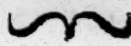
SERM.  
XLVI.  


FROM these words I proposed to consider these *three* points.

*First,* That when men do suffer really and truly for the cause of religion, they may with confidence commit themselves (their lives, and all that is dear to them) to the peculiar and more especial care of the divine providence.

*Secondly,* This we may do, always provided that we be careful of our duty, and do what is required on our part; and that neither to avoid sufferings, nor



to rescue ourselves out of them, we do any thing SERM.  
contrary to our duty and a good conscience; for XLVI.  
this is the meaning of *committing ourselves to God in*   
*well-doing.*

*Thirdly,* To shew what ground of comfort and encouragement the consideration of God, under the notion of *a faithful Creator*, does afford to us, under all our sufferings for a good cause and a good conscience.

The *first* of these points I have treated on at large in my former discourse. I proceed now to the

*Second,* Namely, when in all our sufferings for the cause of religion, we may with confidence and good assurance, commit our selves to the peculiar and more especial care of God's providence; this is to be understood, always provided that we be careful of our duty, and do what is required on our part; and that neither to avoid sufferings, nor to rescue our selves out of them, we do any thing contrary to our duty, and a good conscience. And this I told you was the meaning of *committing ourselves to God in well-doing*; for if we either neglect our duty, or step out of the way of it, by doing things contrary to it, the providence of God will not be concerted to bear us out in such sufferings. So that in our sufferings for the cause of God and religion, *to commit ourselves to him in well-doing*, may reasonably comprehend in it these following particulars:

1. Provided always, that we neglect no lawful means of our preservation from sufferings or our deliverance out of them: In this case men do not commit themselves to the providence of God, but cast themselves out of his care and protection; they do not trust God, but tempt him, and do as it were try whether he will stand by us, when we desert ourselves, and bring us out of trouble, when we would take no care, would use no endeavours to prevent it. If we will needlessly provoke trouble, and run ourselves upon suffering; if we will neglect ourselves,  
and

SERM. and the lawful means of our preservation ; if we will  
 XLVI. give up, and part with those securities of our religion, which the providence of God, and the laws of our country have given us ; if we ourselves will help to pull down the fence which is about us ; if we will disarm ourselves, and by our own act expose ourselves naked and open to danger and sufferings ; why should we think in this case, that God will help us, when we would not help ourselves by those lawful ways, which the providence of God hath put into our hands ?

All trust in God, and dependence upon his providence, does imply, that we join prayer and endeavour together ; faith in God, and a prudent and diligent use of means : If we lazily trust the providence of God, and so *cast all our care upon him*, as to take none at all ourselves, God will take no care of us. In vain do we rely upon the wisdom, and goodness, and power of God ; in vain do we importune and tire heaven with our prayers, to help us against our enemies and persecutors, if we ourselves will do nothing for ourselves : In vain do we hope that God will maintain and defend our religion, against all the secret contrivances, and open assaults of our enemies, if we, who are united in the profession of the same religion, and in all the essentials of faith and worship, will for some small differences in lesser matters, which are of no moment, in comparison of the things wherein we are agreed : I say, if for such slight matters, we will divide and fall out among our selves ; if when the enemy is at the gates, we will still pursue our heats and animosities, and will madly keep open those breaches, which were foolishly made at first ; what can we expect, but that the common enemy should take the advantage, and enter in at them ; and whilst we are so unreasonably and senselessly contending with one another, that they should take the opportunity which we give them to destroy us all.

2. Provided

2. Provided likewise that we do not attempt our SERM.  
preservation or deliverance from suffering, by evil XLVI.  
and unlawful means: We must do nothing that is  
contrary to our duty, and to a good conscience; nor  
comply with any thing, or lend our helping hand  
thereto, that apparently tends to the ruin of our reli-  
gion, neither to divert nor put off sufferings for the  
present, nor to rescue ourselves from under them; be-  
cause we cannot with confidence commit ourselves to  
the providence of God, but *in well-doing*.

This is an eternal rule, from whence we must in  
no case depart, *that men must do nothing contrary to  
the rules and precepts of religion, no not for the sake of  
religion itself*: We must not break any law of God,  
nor disobey the lawful commands of lawful authori-  
ty, to free ourselves from any sufferings whatsoever;  
because the goodness of no end can sanctifie evil  
means, and make them lawful: We must not *speak  
deceitfully for God, nor lie, no, not for the truth; nor  
kill men, though we could thereby do God and religi-  
on the greatest service*. And though all the casuists  
in the world should teach the contrary doctrine (as  
they generally do in the church of *Rome*) yet I would  
not doubt to oppose to all those, the single authority  
of *St. Paul* who expressly condemns this principle,  
and brands it for a *damnable* doctrine, *that evil may  
be done by us, that good may come*, Rom. 3. 8. *And  
not as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm  
that we say, let us do evil, that good may come, whose  
damnation is just*. *St. Paul*, it seems, looked upon,  
it as a most devilish calumny, to insinuate that the  
christian religion gives the least countenance to such  
damnable doctrines and doings as these; and pro-  
nounceth *their damnation to be just*, who either teach  
any such principle, as the doctrine of christianity,  
or practise according to it.

Let those look to it, who teach, that a right in-  
tention, and a good end, will render things, which  
are otherwise evil and unlawful, not only lawful to



SERM. be done by us, but in many cases meritorious; especially where the good of the church, and the extirpation of heresy are more immediately concerned. Of this nature are the doctrines of equivocation and mental reservation, and the lawfulness of such artificial ways of lying, to avoid the danger of the law, when they are brought before heretical magistrates; and this is the common doctrine of the most learned casuists of all orders in the church of *Rome*. And such likewise are their doctrines, of the lawfulness of extirpating hereticks, by the most barbarous and bloody means, and of breaking faith with them, though given by emperors and princes, in the most publick and solemn manner, both which are the avowed doctrines of their general councils, and have frequently been put in practice, to the destruction of many millions of Christians, better and more righteous than themselves. *But we have not so learned Christ, who have heard him, and been taught by him as the truth is in Jesus.* They who are rightly instructed in the christian religion, are so far from thinking it lawful to do any thing that is evil, to bring others under suffering, that they do not allow it in any case whatsoever, no, not for the cause of God and religion, and to free themselves from the greatest sufferings that can be inflicted upon them.

Provided also, that we do trust the providence of God, and do indeed *commit ourselves* to it; relying upon his wisdom and goodness, and entirely submitting and resigning up ourselves to his will and disposal, both as to the degree and the duration of our sufferings; believing that he will do that for us which upon the whole matter, and in the final issue and result of things, will be best for us. That blessing, wherewith *Moses* the man of God blessed the people of *Israel* before his death, doth belong to good men in all ages: *he loveth his people, and all his saints are*  
in

*in his hand, Deut 33. 3. Innumerable are the pro-* SERM.  
*mises in scripture concerning the merciful providence* XLVI.  
*and goodness of God, towards those who trust in him,*  
*and hope in his mercy. Psal. 32. 10. Many sorrows*  
*shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the Lord,*  
*mercy shall compass him about. Psal. 33. 18, 19, 20,*  
*21, 22. Behold the eye of the Lord is upon them that*  
*fear him; upon them that hope in his mercy: to deliver*  
*their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine.*  
*Our soul waiteth for the Lord: he is our help and our*  
*shield. For our heart shall rejoice in him: because we*  
*have trusted in his holy name. Let thy mercy, O Lord,*  
*be upon us, according as we hope in thee. Psal. 34. 22.*  
*The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none*  
*of them that trust in him shall be desolate. Psal. 37.*  
*39, 40. But the salvation of the righteous is of the*  
*Lord, he is their strength in the time of trouble. And*  
*the Lord shall help them and deliver them: he shall de-*  
*liver them from the wicked, and save them because they*  
*trust in him. Psal. 31. 19. O how great is thy good-*  
*ness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee;*  
*which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee*  
*before the sons of men: Psal. 55. 22. Cast thy bur-*  
*then upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall*  
*never suffer the righteous to be moved. Psal. 125. 1.*  
*They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Zion, which*  
*cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. Isa. 26. 3, 4.*  
*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is*  
*stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in*  
*the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlast-*  
*ing strength.*

4. Provided yet further, that we pray earnestly to God for his gracious help and assistance, for his merciful comfort and support under sufferings; that he would be pleased to strengthen our faith, and to encrease and lengthen out our patience, in proportion to the degree and duration of our sufferings.

All the promises which God hath made to us are upon this condition, that we earnestly seek and sue

SERM. to him for the benefit and blessing of them. *Psal. 50. XLVI. 15. Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorifie me. Ezek. 36. 37.* After a great deliverance, and many blessings promised to them, this condition is at last added, *thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, do it for them.* And this likewise is the tenor of the promises of the New Testament, *Matth. 7. 7. Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find: knock, and it shall be opened unto you.* And in this very case that I am speaking of, God expects that we should apply ourselves to him for spiritual wisdom and grace, to behave ourselves under sufferings as we ought: *Jam. 1. 2, 3, 4.* Where speaking of the manifold temptations that Christians would be exercised withal, he directs them to pray to God for wisdom to demean themselves under persecutions, with patience, and constancy and chearfulness. *My brethren, account it all joy, when you fall into divers temptations;* (meaning the temptations and trials of suffering in several kinds) *knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have its perfect work.* And because this is a very difficult duty, and requires a great deal of spiritual skill, to demean ourselves under sufferings as we ought, therefore he adds in the next words: *If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.*

And this earnest application we are to make to God, for *his grace and seasonable help in time of need;* not to put him in mind of his promise, but to testify our dependance upon him, and expectation of all good from him. And we must likewise use great importunity in our prayers to God, to assist us and stand by us in the day of trial, and the hour of temptation. And therefore our Saviour heaps up several words, to denote the great earnestness and importunity which we ought to use in prayer, bidding us to *ask,*



*ask, and seek, and knock.* And to shew that he lays **SERM.** more than ordinary weight upon this matter, and to **XLVI.** encourage our importunity, he speak two several parables to this purpose; the first, *Luke 11. 5.* of the man who by *mere importunity* prevailed with his friend to rise at midnight to do him a kindness, which our Saviour applies to encourage our importunity in prayer, *v. 9.* *And I say unto you, ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.* The other is the parable of the importunate widow, and unjust judge, related by the same Evangelist, *Luke 18. 1.* with this preface to it; and *he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray and not to faint.* And to speak the truth, they seem at first sight two of the oddest of all our Saviour's parables, as if the design of them were to insinuate to us, that God is to be prevailed upon by the *mere importunity* of our prayers to grant our requests: But our blessed Saviour, who best knew his own meaning, tells us, that all that he design'd by it, was only to signify, *that we ought always to pray, and not to faint; that is, to continue instant in prayer, and not to give over after once asking, as if we despaired of prevailing.* Not that *mere importunity* prevails with God to give us those things which he is otherwise unwilling to grant; but because it becomes us to be fervent, and earnest, to testify our faith and confidence in the goodness of God, and the deep sense we have of our own weakness and wants, and unworthiness; and likewise that we set a true value upon the blessings and favours of God, as worth all the earnestness and importunity we can use: And in this decent and sober sense, the success of our prayers may truly be said to depend upon our *importunity*; not that it is necessary to move God to grant our requests, but that it becomes us to be thus affected, that we may be the more fitly qualified for the grace and mercy which God is willing to confer upon us.

SERM. · I have been the longer upon this, to give us a  
 XLVI. right notion of this matter, and that we may the  
 more distinctly understand the true reason why our  
 Saviour does require so much earnestness and im-  
 portunity of prayer on our part; not at all to  
 work upon God, and to dispose him to shew mercy  
 to us (for that he is always inclinable to, whene-  
 ver we are fit for it) but only to dispose and qua-  
 lify us to receive the grace and mercy of God,  
 with greater advantage to ourselves.

5. Provided moreover, that we be not confident  
 of ourselves, and of the force and strength of our  
 own resolution. We know not ourselves, nor the  
 frailty and weaknels of our own resolution, till we  
 are tried. 'Tis wise advice which *Solomon* gives us,  
 and never more seasonable than in the day of trial,  
*Prov. 3. 5, 6, 7. Trust in the Lord with all thine heart,*  
*and lean not to thy own understanding; in all thy ways*  
*acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths; be not*  
*wise in thine own eyes;* that is, be not conceited and  
 confident of thine own wisdom and strength or abi-  
 lity in any kind; there is a secret providence of  
 God, which mingles itself with the actions and spi-  
 rits of men, and disposeth of us unknown to our-  
 selves; and what we think to be the effect of our  
 own strength and resolution, of our own wisdom  
 and contrivance, proceeds from an higher cause,  
 which, unseen to us, does steer and govern us. So  
 the wise man observes, *Prov. 20. 24. Man's goings*  
*are of the Lord, how can a man then understand his*  
*own ways?* And therefore we have reason every one  
 to say with the prophet. *Jer. 10. 23. O Lord, I*  
*know that the way of man is not in himself, it is not in*  
*man that walketh to direct his steps.* Our feet will  
 soon slip, if God do not uphold us by his hand. Re-  
 member how shamefully the chief of our Lord's  
 disciples miscarried, by too much confidence in  
 himself, I mean *St. Peter*; in whose fall we may all  
 see our own frailty; if God do but permit the devil



to have the winnowing of us, there will be a great SERM.  
deal of chaff found in the best of us. What St. XLVI.  
Paul said of himself, 2 Cor. 12. 10. *When I am*  
*weak, then am I strong*, we shall all find true, when  
it comes to the trial; we are then strongest, when,  
in a just sense of our own weakness, we rely most  
upon the strength and power of God.

6. Provided furthermore, that according to our  
ability, we have been much in the exercise of alms  
and charity. For *well-doing*, or *doing good*, is some-  
times taken in a narrower sense, not improper here  
to be mentioned, though perhaps not so particular-  
ly intended here in the text, for *works of charity*  
*and alms*. As, Heb. 13. 16. *But to do good, and*  
*to communicate* (that is, to the necessities of the  
poor) *forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well*  
*pleased*. This kind of *well-doing* is a special preser-  
vative in times of evil; there is no kind of grace or  
virtue to which there are in scripture more special  
promises made of our protection and preservation  
from evil and suffering, of support and comfort  
under them, and deliverance out of them, than to  
this of a charitable and compassionate consideration  
of those who labour under want or suffering.  
Psal. 37. 3. *Trust in the Lord, and do good, so*  
*shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be*  
*fed*: And ver. 19. speaking of *righteous or merciful*  
*men*, *they shall not be ashamed in the evil time, and in*  
*the days of famine they shall be satisfied*. Psal. 41.  
1, 2. *Blessed is he that considereth the poor, the Lord*  
*will deliver him in time of trouble; the Lord will pre-*  
*serve him, and keep him alive, and he shall be bles-*  
*sed upon the earth; and thou wilt not deliver him unto*  
*the will of his enemies*.

There are likewise in the apocryphal books ex-  
cellent sayings for the encouragement of charity,  
as that which will be particularly considered and  
rewarded to us in the times of danger and distress,  
in the days of affliction and suffering, Tob. 4 7,



SERM. 8, 9, 10. Give alms of thy substance, and turn not  
XLVI. thy face from any poor man, and the face of God shall

not be turned away from thee; if thou hast abundance, give alms accordingly; if thou hast but a little, be not afraid to give according to that little, for thou layest up for thyself a good treasure against the day of necessity, because that alms do deliver from death, and suffereth not to come into darkness. Ecclus. 3. 31. Speaking of him that gives alms and is ready to do kindness to others: *He is mindful of that which may come hereafter; and when he falleth he shall find a stay.* And chap. 29. 11, 12, 13. *Lay up thy treasure according to the commandment of the Most High, and it shall bring thee more profit than gold; shut up alms in thy store-houses, and it shall deliver thee from all affliction, it shall fight for thee against thine enemies, better than a mighty shield, and strong spear.*

I have often said it, and am verily persuaded of it, that one of the best signs of God's mercy and favour to this poor nation, is, that God hath been pleased of late years to stir up so general a disposition in men to works of alms and charity, and thereby to revive the primitive spirit of christianity, which so eminently abounded in this grace, and taught those who believed in God to be careful to maintain and practise good works. And nothing gives me greater hopes that God hath mercy still in store for us, than that men are so ready to shew mercy; there are great objects to exercise our charity upon in this time of the general suspension of trade and business, from an apprehension of approaching troubles; by reason whereof, both the numbers and necessities of our poor are greatly and daily encreased among us; and besides the poor of our own nation, God hath sent us great numbers from abroad, I mean those who are fled hither for shelter, from that violent storm of persecution which hath lately fallen upon them for the cause of our  
common

common religion. According to the compassion SERM.  
 we shew to them, we may expect that God will XLVI.  
 either preserve us from the like sufferings, or graci-  
 ously support us under them. What do we know,  
 but that God is now trying us, and hath purpose-  
 ly put this opportunity into our hands, of preven-  
 ting, or mitigating, or shortning our own suffer-  
 ings, according as we extend our charity and pi-  
 ty to those who have suffered so deeply for the  
 cause of God, and his truth?

7. Provided in the last place, and above all,  
 that we be sincere in our religion, and endeavour  
 to be universally good, *and holy in all manner of*  
*conversation, and to abound in all the fruits of righte-*  
*ousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the praise and*  
*glory of God.* This is the largest sense of *well-doing.*  
 and the most necessary of all the rest, to prepare  
 us for sufferings, and to give us courage and con-  
 stancy under them; and likewise to engage the  
 providence of God to a tender care of us, and con-  
 cernment for us, if he shall see it fit to bring us  
 into a state of suffering.

But if we live in open contempt and violation of  
 God's laws, if we make no conscience of our ways  
 and actions, we cannot possibly have any well-  
 grounded trust and confidence in God, for *he hates*  
*all the workers of iniquity, and his providence sets*  
*it self against them for evil.* Bad men draw many  
 mischiefs and inconveniencies upon themselves, as  
 the natural consequences of their actions; but be-  
 sides this, the vengeance of God haunts and pur-  
 sues evil-doers, and his just providence many times  
 involves them in many difficulties and dangers, be-  
 sides and beyond the natural course of things: *Up-*  
*on the wicked (says David) he will rain snares:* So  
 that as we ever expect the comfortable effects of  
 the divine care and providence, we must live in a  
 dutiful obedience to God's holy will and laws.

Bad

SERM. XLVI. Bad men may make a profession of the true religion, and may in some sort believe it, though they do not live according to it; and yet perhaps for all this, out of a mere generosity and obstinacy of mind, they cannot bear to be threatned and terrified out of the profession of the truth; and will endure a great deal of trouble and inconveniencies, before they will renounce it; knowing themselves to be so far in the right, that they stand for the truth, and hoping perhaps thereby to make some amends for their bad practice. But when all is done, nothing gives a man true courage and resolution, like the testimony of our own hearts, concerning our own sincerity, and the conscience of well-doing. And on the contrary, he that hath not the resolution and patience to mortify his lusts, and to restrain his appetites, and to subdue his irregular passions for the sake of God and religion, will not easily bring himself to submit to great sufferings upon that account. There is considerable difficulty in the practice of religion, and the resolute course of a holy life; but surely it is much easier *to live as religion requires we should do, than to lay down our lives for it;* and (as I have told you upon another occasion) he that cannot prevail with himself *to live a saint,* will much more hardly be persuaded *to die a martyr.* I proceed to the

*Third point, namely, what ground of comfort and encouragement the consideration of God, under the notion of a faithful Creator, does afford to us under all our suffering for a good conscience and a good cause. Let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator.* And in this I shall be very brief.

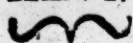
And this is a firm ground of comfort and encouragement to us, under all our sufferings for God, to consider him as the author of our beings,  
or



or as it is expressed in the text, *as a faithful Cre-* SERM.  
*ator*; one that is not fickle and inconstant in his XLVI  
 affection and kindness to his creatures; but is  
 true to his own design, and will not abandon and  
 forsake the work of his own hands: So great a  
 benefit as that of our beings, freely conferred up-  
 on us, is but an earnest of God's further kindness  
 to us, and future care of us; if by our ill carri-  
 age towards him, we do not render ourselves un-  
 worthy and incapable of it; That we are God's  
 creatures, is a demonstration that he hath a kind-  
 nels for us: if he had not, he would never have  
 made us; as it is excellently said in the *Wisdom of*  
*Solomon*, chap. ii. 23, 24. *Thou hast mercy upon*  
*all, for thou lovest all the things that are, and abhor-*  
*rest nothing which thou hast made: For never wouldst*  
*thou have made any thing, if thou hadst hated it.*  
 And ver. 26. *Thou sparest all, for they are thine, O*  
*Lord, thou lover of souls.*

To whom then may we with so much confi-  
 dence commit ourselves, as to him who freely gave  
 us our being? From whom may we expect so ten-  
 der a regard and consideration of our case, and all  
 the circumstances of it, as from this great foun-  
 der and benefactor? For *he that made us knows our*  
*frame, and whereof we are made*, and how much  
 we are able to bear; he considers our strength, or  
 rather our weakness, and what courage and reso-  
 lution he hath endued us withal, and what com-  
 fort and support we stand in need of in the day of  
 tribulation. And as they who make armour, are  
 wont to try that which they think to be good and  
 well tempered with a stronger charge, not to break  
 and hurt it, but to prove and praise it: so God ex-  
 exerciseth those whom he hath fitted and tempered  
 for it, with manifold temptations, *that the trial of*  
*their faith*, as St. Peter expresseth it, 1 Pet. i. 7.  
*being much more precious than of gold tried in the fire,*  
 may

SERM. *may be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at*  
 XLVI. *the appearing of Jesus Christ.*



So that this consideration that we are God's creatures, does (as I may say) oblige him in faithfulness to his own act, and in consequence of his bringing us into being at first, to be concerned for us afterwards, so as never to abandon us, nor quite to take away his loving-kindness and mercy from us; 'till we are good for nothing, and do in a manner cease to be what he made us, that is, *reasonable creatures*. A person or people must have proceeded to the utmost degree of degeneracy, when God will consider them no longer as his creatures, nor shew any pity or favour to them; things must be come to extremity, when God deals thus with us, as he threatned the people of *Israel*, Isa. 27. 11. *When the boughs are withered, they shall be broken off, and set on fire; for it is a people of no understanding: therefore he that made them, will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them, will shew them no favour.*

And now I have done with these three points which I proposed to handle from this text, and the discourse which I have made upon them, does all along apply itself, by directing us how we ought to commit ourselves to the providence of God, in all cases of danger and suffering, especially for the cause of God, and his truth, viz. in the faithful discharge of our duty and a good conscience, and by a firm trust and confidence in the wisdom and goodness of the divine providence, not doubting but that *he who made us, and knows our frame*, will have a tender care of us, and not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able.

And as to our present danger, and that terrible storm which threatens us, let us pray to God, if it be his will, to divert it; but if otherwise he hath determined, to sit and prepare us for it. And let us be fervent and earnest in our prayers to him, not  
 that

that he is moved by our importunity, but that we SERM.  
may thereby be qualified and made fit to receive XLVI.  
the mercy which we beg of him.

And let us take this occasion to do that which we should have done without it, *to break off our sins by repentance, and to turn every one of us from the evil of our ways;* and hereby we may render God propitious to us, and put ourselves under the more immediate care and protection of his providence; that we may prevent his Judgments, and turn away his wrath and displeasure from us, as he did once from a great and sinful city and people, upon their sincere humiliation and repentance, *Jonah 3. 10.* where it is said of the people of *Nineveh*, *that God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way, and God repented of the evil that he had said he would do unto them, and he did it not.* Above all, let us be sincere in the profession of our religion, and conscientious in the practice of it; nothing will bear us up under great trials and sufferings, like *the testimony of a good conscience, void of offence towards God and towards men.*

I will conclude this whole discourse with those apostolical blessings and prayers, *Col. 1. 10, 11.* *That ye may walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, strengthened with all might according to his glorious power, unto all patience, and long-suffering, with joyfulness.* And *2 Thes. 2. 16, 17.* *Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father, who hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good work. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*



# SERMON XLVII.

Of the Work assign'd to every Man,  
and the Season for doing it.

---

✱

JOHN ix. 4.

*I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day; The night cometh, when no man can work.*

SERM.  
XLVII  
w

**T**HES E words our blessed Saviour spake of himself, whilst he was upon earth; in which he tells us, that he was sent by God into the world, and had a certain work and employment appointed him during his abode in it. A great work indeed! to instruct, and reform, and save mankind. A work of great labour, and pains, and patience, not to be done in a short time; and yet the time for doing it was not long after he came into the world: it was a good while before he began it; and after he began it, the time of working was not long before the night came, and put an end to it: *I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.*

But that which our Saviour here speaks of himself, and which properly belongs to him, and no other; may yet be accommodated to every man, with some allowance for the difference and disproportion. For tho' every man be not sent by God into the world after so particular a manner, and upon so particular and vast a design: yet upon a general account, every man is sent by God into this world, and hath a work given him to do in it, which he

is

is concern'd vigorously to mind and to prosecute SERM.  
with all his might. And tho' every man be not sent XLVII  
to save the whole world, as the Son of God was, yet  
every man is sent by God into the world, *to work*  
*out his own salvation*, and to take care of that in  
the first place, and then to promote the salvation of  
others, as much as in him lies. So that every one  
of us may, in a very good sense, accommodate these  
words of our Saviour to himself: *I must work the*  
*works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night*  
*cometh, when no man can work.*

I shall therefore at this time take the liberty to  
handle these words according to this moral accom-  
modation of them, and apply what our Saviour here  
says of himself, to every man that cometh into the  
world: and this I shall do, by shewing these *three*  
things.

*First*, That every man hath a work assigned him  
to do in this world, by him that sent him into it;  
and may in some sense say, as our blessed Saviour did  
of himself, *I must work the works of him that sent me.*

*Secondly*, That there is a certain and limited time  
for every man to do this work in. *While it is day.*

*Thirdly*, That after this season is expired, there  
will be no further opportunity of working. *The*  
*night cometh, when no man can work.*

*First*, Every man hath a work assigned him to  
do in this world, by him that sent him into it, and  
may in some sense say, as our blessed Saviour did of  
himself, *I must work the works of him that sent me.*  
God who made man a reasonable creature, and hath  
endowed him with faculties, whereby he is capable  
of knowing and serving him; hath appointed him  
a work and service suitable to these faculties: and  
having infused an immortal soul into this earthly  
body, hath certainly designed him for a state beyond  
this life, in which he shall be for ever happy or mise-  
rable, according as he useth and demeans himself  
in this world.

SERM. So that the work which every one of us hath to  
 XLVII do in this world, is to prepare and fit ourselves for  
 ~~~~~ that eternal duration which remains for us after  
 death. For the life which we live now in this world,
 is a time of exercise, a short state of probation and
 tryal, in order to a durable and endless state, in
 which we shall be immutably fix'd in another world.
 This world, into which we are now sent for a little
 while, is as it were God's school, in which immortal
 spirits cloathed with flesh, are trained and bred
 up for eternity: and therefore the best, the only sure
 way to be happy for ever, is, so to improve the
 short and uncertain time of this life, that we may
 approve ourselves to God in this world, and enjoy
 him in the next: or (as *St. Paul* expresth it) *that*
having our fruit unto holiness, our end may be everlasting
life.

And this work consists in these *three* things.

I. In the care of our own salvation.

II. In doing what we can to promote the salvation
 of others.

III. And in order to both these, in the careful
 improvement and good husbandry of our time.

I. In the care of our own salvation. And this consists in *two* things.

1. In the worship of Almighty God.

2. In the careful and conscientious practice and
 obedience of his holy laws.

1. The care of our own salvation consists in the
 pious and devout worship of Almighty God; that
 we honour him, and pay him that homage and respect,
 which is due from creatures to him that made them,
 and is the great sovereign and judge of the world;
 that we have an inward reverence and esteem of him,
 and that we express this by all solemn external
 acknowledgments of him; as by praying to him for
 the supply of our wants; by praising him for all the
 blessings and benefits which we have received at his
 hands; and that we set apart constant
 and

and solemn times for the performance of these duties; and then when we are employed in them, we be serious, and hearty, and attentive to what we are about, and perform every part of divine worship with those circumstances of reverence and respect, which may testify our awful sense of the divine majesty, and our inward and profound veneration of him, with whom we have to do: And this is that which is directly and properly *religion*.

SERM.
XLVII

2. This care of our own salvation does consist likewise in the conscientious and constant obedience and practice of all God's holy laws, in the conformity of our lives and actions to the laws which he hath given us, whether they be natural, or written upon our hearts, or made known to us by the revelation of his word; that we govern our passions by reason, and moderate ourselves in the use of sensual delights, so as not to transgress the rules of temperance and chastity; that we demean ourselves towards others, and converse with them with justice and fidelity, with kindness and charity.

These are the sum of the divine laws, and the heads of our duty towards ourselves and others; all which are more powerfully enforced upon us by the revelation of the gospel, and the plain promises and threatnings of it; the faith of Christ being the most firm and effectual principle both of piety towards God, and of universal obedience to all his particular commands.

And this is the great work which God hath sent us to do in the world. So the wise man sums up our duty, *Eccles. 12. 13. Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man.* The fear and reverence of the divine majesty is the great foundation and principle of religion; but obedience to God's laws is the life and practice of it. God does not expect that we should spend the greatest part of our time in the immediate acts of religion, and in the solemn duties of his worship and service;

SERM. but only that we should allot a fitting portion of our
 XLVII time to these, according to the circumstances of our
 condition in this world, and the example of holy
 and good men that are in the like circumstances with
 ourselves. For such is the goodness of God, that he
 does not only allow us to provide for the necessities
 and conveniencies of this life; but hath made it
 our duty so to do. It is one of the precepts of the
 gospel, which the Apostle chargeth the bishops and
 teachers of the gospel to inculcate frequently up-
 on christians, *that they which have believed in God,*
should be careful to maintain good works; that is, to
 employ themselves in the works of an honest calling:
for necessary uses; that is, for the support of their fa-
 milies, and the relief of those who are in want and
 necessity. And the Apostle lays great weight and
 stress upon this, as a very great duty, *Tit. 3. 8. This*
is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou
affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God,
might be careful to maintain good works. These things
are good and profitable unto men; that is, of general
 benefit and advantage to mankind.

So that no man's calling is a hindrance to religion,
 but a part of it; and by performing the duties of pi-
 ety in their proper seasons, and spending the rest of
 our time in any honest and useful employment, we
 may make our whole life a perpetual serving of God;
 we may *glorify God* in our *eating and drinking*, and
 in all other lawful and useful actions of life. In
 serving the occasions and necessities of life, with so-
 briety and temperance, and in managing our world-
 ly commerce with justice and integrity, we may
 serve God, and perform considerable duties of reli-
 gion.

So that provided we do nothing that is sinful, and
 manage the actions and concernments of this life
 with a due regard and subserviency to the great in-
 terests of eternity, we may do the work of God all
 the while we are providing for ourselves, and em-
 ployed

ployed in the works of an honest calling : For God, SERM. XLVII
 who hath designed this life, in order to the other, considers the necessities of our present state, and allows us to make provision for it.

There are some persons indeed, whose birth and condition sets them above the common employments of life, and the works of an ordinary calling : but these also have a work given them to do ; for God hath sent no man into the world to no purpose, and only to take his pastime therein ; *neque enim ita generati sumus à natura, ut ad ludum & jocum facti esse videamur ; sed ad severitatem potius, & quædam studia graviora atque majora : For we are not* (says Tully *de off. lib. 1.*) *so framed by nature, as if we were made for sport and jest, but for more serious employments, and for greater and weightier business ;* and those who are tied to no particular calling, may allow so much larger portions of their time to religion, and the service of God ; and God likewise expects from them, that they should be useful to mankind in some higher and nobler way, according to the publickness of their station and influence. Such persons may be serviceable to their country, and the affairs of government, and in the care of publick justice, and may employ their time in preparing and rendering themselves more fit for this service. They may find a great deal of work to do in the good government of their families, and in the prudent care and management of their estates, and in reconciling differences among their neighbours, and in considering the necessities of the poor, and providing for their supply.

So that besides the proper work of religion, and the more immediate service of God, every man in the world, how exempt soever his condition be from the common care and drudgery of human life, may find work enough wherein he may usefully employ all his time, and provide for his own, and for the

SERM. common benefit of mankind ; and God expects it as
 XLVII a duty from such, that every man should employ
 himself in some work or other suitable to the station
 in which God hath placed him in this world.

II. The work which God hath given us to do in the world, consists in doing what we can to further and promote the salvation of others. This chiefly lies upon *us*, who are *the ministers of God*, and to *whom the word of reconciliation is committed*. We are more especially commission'd and appointed for this work, and are *ambassadors for Christ to beseech men in his stead to be reconciled to God*. We are sent by God in a more peculiar manner, and appointed for this very work, *to watch for mens souls*, and to be instruments and means of their eternal happiness. And therefore we who are sent by God in a more peculiar manner, and have this work assigned us to do in the world, ought to be very vigorous and industrious in it: and this, whether we consider the nature of our employment, or the glorious reward of it.

I. If we consider the nature of our employment, both in respect of the honour and the happiness of it. 'Tis the most honourable work that mortal man can be employed in ; 'tis the same in kind, and in the main end and design of it, with that of the blessed Angels ; for we also are *Ministring Spirits, sent forth by God to minister for the good of those who shall be heirs of salvation*. We are *the messengers and Ambassadors of God* to men, sent to treat with them about the terms of their peace and reconciliation with God, to offer salvation to them, and to direct them to the best ways and means of procuring it. Nay, we have the honour to be employed in the very same work that the Son of God was, when he was upon the earth, *to seek and to save them that are lost* ; and *to call sinners to repentance* ; and to carry on that work, whereof he himself laid the foundation, when he was in the world. And what greater honour can be put upon the sons of men, than to help forward that
 glorious

glorious design and undertaking of the Son of God, SERM.
for the salvation of mankind?

XLVII

And 'tis an employment no less happy than honourable; 'tis not to drudge about the mean and low concerns of this life, a perpetual toil and care about *what we shall eat and drink, and wherewithal we shall be clothed*, which is the business of a worldly employment; but it is a direct and immediate *seeking the kingdom of God, and his righteousness*, and a continual endeavour to promote these. It does not consist in the labour of our body, and in bodily toil; but in the delightful exercise of our minds, about the best and noblest objects, God, and heaven, and eternity; in an earnest and faithful endeavour by all wise ways and means to gain souls to God, and *to turn sinners from the errors of their ways*, and to prevent their eternal ruin and destruction; and next to the procuring of our own happiness, to be instrumental to the happiness of others, which is certainly the most pleasant and noble work that we can possibly be employed in; especially if we consider, that by the very nature of our employment we do at the same time, and by the very same means, carry on both these designs, of the salvation of ourselves and others. So St. Paul tells *Timothy*, when he exhorts him upon this very consideration, *to give himself wholly to this blessed work; because, says he, in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee*, 1 Tim. 4. 16. And when two of the greatest and best designs in the world, our own happiness, and the salvation of others, do so happily meet in one, and are jointly carried on by the same labour: this ought to be a great spur and incitement to us, to be vigorous and unwearied, and *abundant in the work of the Lord*; and a mighty encouragement to us *to preach the word, to be instant in season, and out of season, and to be examples to others, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity*; as St. Paul chargeth *Timothy* in the most solemn and awful manner, *before*

SERM. *God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the*
 XLVII *quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom,*

1 Tim. 4. 12. and 2 Tim. 4. 1. And then,

2. If we consider the glorious reward of this work. If we be faithful and industrious in it, it will advance us to a higher degree of glory and happiness in the other world. *They that be wise* (says the Prophet, *Dan. 12. 3.*) *shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.* They that are industrious in this work, as they are *worthy of double honour* in this world, so they shall shine with a double glory and lustre in the other.

But tho' this work of promoting the salvation of others, be chiefly incumbent upon those whose office it is to attend upon this very thing; yet we are all of us concerned in it; according to the advantages and opportunities we have for it. Every man is concern'd to help forward the salvation of his brother, and not to let him perish, if he can help it; and it is in every man's power to contribute something to this blessed work of saving others, by seasonable counsel and advice, by kind and gentle reproof, but especially by a holy and exemplary conversation, by a shining virtue, which hath a silent power of persuasion, and I know not what secret charm and attraction to draw and allure others to the imitation of it.

III. And in order to both these, the saving of ourselves and others, this work which God hath given us to do in the world, consists in the careful use and good husbandry of our time; for without this, neither the one, nor the other can be promoted and carried on to any purpose. Time is the season and opportunity of carrying on of any work, and for that reason is one of the most valuable things; and yet nothing is more wastefully spent, and more prodigally squandered away by a great part of mankind than this, which, next to our immortal souls, is of all other things most precious; because upon
 the

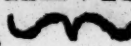
the right use or abuse of our time, our eternal happiness or misery does depend. Men have generally some guard upon themselves, as to their money and estates, and will not with eyes open suffer others to rob and deprive them of it: But we will let any body almost rob us of our time, and are contented to expose this precious treasure to every body's rapine and extortion, and can quietly look on, whilst men thrust in their hands, and take it out by whole handfuls, as if it were of no greater value than silver was in *Solomon's* days, no more than *the stones in the street*. And yet when it is gone, all the silver and gold in the world cannot purchase and fetch back the least moment of it, when perhaps we would give all the world for a very small part of that time, which we parted with upon such cheap and easy terms.

Good God! what a stupid and senseless prodigality is this? do we consider what we do, when we give away such large portions of our time to our ease and pleasure, to diversion and idleness, or trifling and unprofitable conversation, to the making and receiving of impertinent visits, and the usual and almost inseparable attendants thereof, spiteful observations upon them that are present, and slandering and back-biting those that are absent; (for the great design of most people in visits, is not to better one another, but to spy and *make* faults, and not to *mend* them; to get time off their hands, to shew their fine cloaths, and to recommend themselves to the mutual contempt of one another, by a plentiful impertinence;) when we part with it by wholesale in sleep and dressings, and can spend whole mornings between the comb and the glass, and the afternoon at Plays, and whole nights in gaming, or in riot, and lewdness, and intemperance; in all which people commonly waste their money and their time together!

SERM. Nay how do even the best of us misplace this precious treasure; and tho' we do not employ it to wicked purposes, and in works of iniquity, yet we do not apply it to the best and noblest use, to the glory of God, and the good and salvation of men! By thus laying out this treasure, we might *lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven*, and help others on in the way thither.

Thus our blessed Saviour employed his precious time in *going about doing good*, in all kinds and upon all occasions, healing the bodies, and enlightning the minds, and saving the souls of men: This was his business, and this was his delight; it was *his meat and drink*, and his very life, he spent himself in it, and sacrificed his ease, and his safety, and his life to these great ends, for which he came into the world; he considered the goodness and the greatness of this work, and the little time he had to do it in, which made him incessantly industrious in it, and to run the race which was set before him with great speed, and *to work while it is day*, because he knew *the night would come when no man can work*. And this brings me to the

Second thing I observed from the text, namely, that there is a certain and limited time for every man to do this work in; *while it is day, I must work the works of him that sent me, whilst it is day*. And this *day* comprehends all the opportunities of our life, which will be soon over, and therefore had need to be well spent. A great part of our life is past before the season of working begins: it is a great while before the use of our reason begins, and we come to have our senses exercised to discern between good and evil; before our understandings are ripe for the serious consideration of God and religion, and the due care of our souls, and of the eternal concernment of another world, so that this first part of our life is in a great measure useless and unprofitable to us, in regard to our great design. For infancy and childhood

childhood are but the dawns of this day, and no SERM.
 fit time to work in; and youth, which is as the XLVII
 morning of this day, tho' it is the flower of our time, 
 and the most proper season of all other, for the r-
 membrance of God, and the impressions of religion;
 yet it is usually possess'd by vanity and vice; the com-
 mon custom and practice of the world, hath devo-
 ted this best part of our age to the worst employments,
 to the service of sin and of our lusts. How very few
 are there that lay hold of this opportunity, and em-
 ploy it to the best purposes? And yet the following
 course of our lives doth in a great measure depend
 upon it: for most persons do continue and hold on
 in the way which they set out at first, whether it be
 good or bad. And those who neglect to improve
 this first opportunity of their lives, do seldom re-
 cover themselves afterwards. God's grace may seize
 upon men in any part of their lives; but according
 to the most ordinary methods of it, the foundations
 and principles of religion and virtue are most com-
 monly laid in a pious and virtuous education. This is
 the great opportunity of our lives, which setteth and
 fixeth most men, either in a good or bad course, and
 the fortune of their whole lives does usually follow it,
 and depend upon it.

'Tis true indeed our day continues many times a
 great while longer, and we are to work while it con-
 tinues; and 'tis never too late to begin to do well,
 and to enter upon a good course: But there is no
 such proper and advantageous season for the begin-
 ning of this work, as in our youth and tender years.
This is the accepted time, this is the day of salvation.
 God's grace is then most forward and ready to assist
 us; and we are then least of all indispos'd for the
 receiving of the impressions of it; and the impres-
 sions of it do then go deepest into our minds, and
 are most lasting and durable. But if we neglect this
 opportunity, we provoke God by degrees to with-
 draw

SERM. draw his Grace, and to take away his holy Spirit
 XLVII from us, and by degrees we settle in vicious habits,
 and are every day more and more *harden'd through the deceitfulness of sin*. It is never too late to work while the day lasts; but the sooner we begin this work, and set about it in good earnest, the easier we shall find it; if we defer it late, every step will be up the hill, and against the grain.

Thirdly, After this season is expired, there will be no further opportunity of working; when this day is once at an end, then *cometh the night when no man can work*. The night is a time unfit for work, when we can hardly do any thing, if we had never so great a mind to it; and there is such a night coming upon every one of us, and Wo be to us if we have our work to do when the night overtakes us.

There is usually an evening before this night, when it will be very difficult for us, and next to impossible, to do this work; and this is the time of sickness and old age, in which men are commonly unfit for any work; but most of all, that which requires the whole force and vigour of our minds, the business of religion. If we attempt this work then, we shall go very heartlessly about it, and do it very imperfectly, and be forced to flubber it over, and to huddle it up in great haste and confusion, and so as we can hardly hope that God will accept it. For how unfit are men to do any thing, when they are full of the sense of their own infirmities, and life itself is become so great a burthen to them, that they are hardly able to stand under it! How incapable shall we then be of doing the greatest and most momentous work of our lives, when our faculties are almost quite spent and worn out, and all the powers of life are decay'd in us; when our understandings are dark and dull, our memories frail and treacherous, and our *hearts hard and deceitful above all things*! When sickness and old age overtake us, we shall then

then find to our sorrow, that *sufficient for that day is* **SERM.**
the evil thereof; we shall have need then of nothing **XLVII**
 else to do, but to bear our infirmities with patience
 and decency; and it is well if we can rally together,
 of the broken forces of our reason, so much as may
 be a sufficient guard to us against peevishness and dis-
 content; we had need then have nothing else to do,
 but to be old and weak, to be sick and die.

Besides, how can we expect that God should ac-
 cept of any work that we do at such a time? With
 what face can we put off God with the dregs of our
 life? or how can we hope that he will be pleased with
 the service of those years, which we ourselves *take no*
pleasure in? if we offer the lame in sacrifice, is it not
evil? if we offer the blind, is it not evil? offer it now to
thy Governor, and see if he will be pleased with thee.

And sickness is commonly as bad a time as old age,
 and usually incumber'd with greater difficulties, and
 clog'd with more indispositions. If a violent di-
 stemper seize upon us, it many times takes away the
 use of our reason, and deprives us of all opportunity
 of consideration; it makes us both insensible of the
 danger of our condition, and incapable of using
 the means to avoid it. And if we have neglected
 religion before, and have put off the great work of
 our life to the end of it, our opportunity is irreco-
 verably lost; for there is nothing to be done in reli-
 gion, when our reason is once departed from us; *the*
night is then come indeed, and darkness hath over-
taken us; and tho' we be still alive, yet are we as
 unfit for any work, as if we were naturally dead.

And this is no such rare and extraordinary case;
 for it happens to many; and every man that wilfully
 defers the work of religion and repentance to a dying
 hour, hath reason to fear that he shall be thus sur-
 prized in his sin and security, and by the just judg-
 ment of God depriv'd of all the opportunity of life
 and salvation, while he is yet in the land of the liv-
 ing.

But

SERM.

XLVII

But if God be more merciful unto us, and visit us with such a sickness as leaves us the use of our understandings, yet all that we do in religion at such a time, proceeds from so violent a cause, from the present terror of death, and the dreadful apprehension of that eternal misery which is just ready to swallow us up, that it is one of the hardest things in the world, not only for others, but even for ourselves, to know whether our resolutions, and this sudden and hasty fit of repentance be sincere or not: For it is natural, and almost unavoidable, for a man to repent, and be sorry for what he hath done when he is going to execution: But the great question is, What this man would do, if his life were spared? Whether his repentance would hold good, and he would become a new man, and change his former course of life, or relapse into it again? And it is by no means certain, that he would not be as bad as he was before: Because we see many, who, when they lie upon a sick bed, give all imaginable testimony of a deep sorrow, and a hearty repentance for their sins, who yet upon their recovery return to their former sins with a greater appetite, and make themselves *ten times more the children of wrath than they were before.* So that all the work that we can do at such a time, ought not to be much reckoned upon, and can give us little or no comfort; because it is so infinitely uncertain whether it be real and sincere, and whether the effect of so violent a cause would last and continue if the cause were removed. Therefore *we should work while it is day;* for whatever we do in the evening of our lives, will be done with great difficulty, and with very doubtful success.

But besides this evening, there is *a night coming when no man can work:* Death will seize upon us, and then our state will be irrecoverably concluded; after that it will be impossible for us to do any thing towards our own salvation, or to have any thing done for us by others; the prayers of the living will

not

not avail the dead, *as the tree falls, so it lies; there* **SERM.**
is no wisdom, nor counsel, nor device in the grave whi- **XLVII**
ther we are going; therefore, according to the coun-
sel of the wise man, what our hand findeth to do, let
us do it with our might.

This counsel concerns all ages and persons. I will apply it to the young, in the words of the wise preacher, *Ecclef. 12. 1. Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them.* To them who are in the vigour of their age, in the words of the Prophet, *Isa. ch. 55. 6. Seek the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.* And to them that are old, in the words of another Prophet, *Jer. 13. 16. Give glory to the Lord your God, before he causeth darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness.* And let us, every one of us, of what age or condition soever, apply it to ourselves, in the words of our blessed Saviour here in the text, *I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work.*

SERMON XLVIII.

Of the great Duties of Natural Religion, with the Ways and Means of knowing them.

× MICAH. vi. 6, 7, 8.

Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with Calves of a year old?

Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of Rams, or with ten thousands of Rivers of Oyl? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

SERM.
XLVIII

IN the beginning of this chapter, the Prophet tells the people of Israel, that *the Lord had a controversy with them*; and that he might direct them how to take up this quarrel, he brings in one making this enquiry in the name of the people; *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God?* That is, by what kind of worship or devotion may I address myself to him in the most acceptable manner? by what means may I hope to appease his displeasure? To satisfy this enquiry, he first instanceth in the chief kinds of sacrifices and expiations that were in use among the Jews
and

and Heathens : *Shall I come before him with burnt offerings?* the constant sacrifice that was offered to God by way of acknowledgment of his dominion over the creatures: *with Calves of a year old?* which was the sin-offering which the high-priest offered for himself. Or will he rather accept of those great and costly sacrifices which were offered upon solemn and publick occasions, such as that was which Solomon offered at the dedication of the Temple? *Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of Rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of Oyl?* Or if none of these will do, shall I try to atone him after the manner of the Heathen, by the dearest thing in the world, the first-born of my Children? *Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?* If God was to be appeased at all, surely they thought it must be by some of these ways, for beyond these they could imagine nothing of greater value and efficacy.

But the Prophet tells them that they were quite out of the way, in thinking to pacify God upon these terms; that there are other things which are much better and more pleasing to him than any of these sacrifices. For some of them were expressly forbidden by God, as *the offering up of our Children*; and for the rest, they were not good in themselves, but meerly by virtue of their institution, and because they were commanded. But the things which he would recommend to them are such as are good in their own nature, and required of us by God upon that account. *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*

So that in these words you have,

First, An enquiry which is the best way to appease God when he is offended? *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God?*

Secondly, The way that men are apt to take in this case; and that is by some external piece of religion
and

SERM. and devotion ; such as sacrifice was both among *Jews*
 XLVIII. and *Heathens*. *Shall I come before him with burnt-off-*
 ~~~~~ *ferings, &c.* By which questions the Prophet inti-

mates that men are very apt to pitch upon this course.

*Thirdly*, the course which God himself directs to, and which will effectually pacify him. *He hath shew-*  
*ed thee, O man, what is good ; and what doth the*  
*Lord thy God require of thee, &c.*

The *first* being a meer question, there needs no more to be said of it ; only that it is a question of great importance ; what is the most effectual way to appease God when we have offended him ? For who can bear his indignation, and who can stand before him, when once he is angry ? Let us consider then, in the

*Second* place, the way that men are apt to take to pacify God ; and that is by some external piece of religion and devotion, such as were sacrifices among the *Jews* and *Heathens*. *Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings ?* This is the way which men are most apt to chuse. The *Jews*, you see, pitch'd upon the external parts of their religion, those which were most pompous and solemn, the richest and most costly sacrifices ; so they might but keep their sins, they were well enough content to offer up any thing else to God ; they thought nothing too good for him, provided he would not oblige them to become better.

And thus it is among ourselves, when we apprehend God is displeased with us, and his judgments are abroad in the earth, we are content to do any thing, but *to learn righteousness* ; we are willing to submit to any kind of external devotion and humiliation, to fast, and pray, to afflict ourselves and to cry mightily unto God ; things some of them good in themselves, but the least part of that which God requires of us.

And as for the Church of *Rome*, in case of publick judgments and calamities, they are the most inquisi-

sitive

fitive and (as they pretend) the most skilful people SERM.  
 in the world to pacify God ; and they have a thou- XLVIII  
 sand solemn devices to this purpose. I do not wrong  
 them, by representing them enquiring after this  
 manner. “ Shall I go before a *Crucifix*, and bow  
 “ myself to it, as to *the high God*? And because  
 “ the Lord is a *great King*, and it is perhaps too  
 “ much boldness and arrogancy to make immediate  
 “ addressees always to him ; to which of the *Saints*  
 “ or *Angels* shall I go to mediate for me, and in-  
 “ tercede on my behalf? Will the Lord be pleased  
 “ with thousands of *Pater-Nosters*, or with ten thou-  
 “ sands of *Ave-Marys*? Shall the *Host* travel in pro-  
 “ cession, or myself undertake a tedious *Pilgrimage*?  
 “ Or shall I list my self a Soldier for *the holy war*,  
 “ or for *the extirpation of hereticks*? Shall I give half  
 “ my estate to a *Convent* for my transgression, or  
 “ chastise and punish my body for the sin of my  
 “ soul?” Thus men deceive themselves, and will  
 submit to all the extravagant severities, that the pe-  
 tulancy and folly of men can devise and impose up-  
 on them. And indeed it is not to be imagined,  
 when men are once under the power of superstition,  
 how ridiculous they may be, and yet think them-  
 selves religious ; how prodigiously they may play  
 the fool, and yet believe they please God ; what cruel  
 and barbarous things they may do to themselves and  
 others, and yet be *verily persuaded they do God good*  
*service.*

And what is the mystery of all this, but that men  
 are loth to do that, without which nothing else that  
 we do is acceptable to God? They *hate to be reform-*  
*ed* ; and for this reason, they will be content to do  
 any thing, rather than be put to the trouble of mend-  
 ing themselves ; every thing is easy in comparison  
 of this task, and God may have any terms of them,  
 so he will let them be quiet in their sins, and excuse  
 them from the real virtues of a good life. And this  
 brings me to the

SERM.

XLVIII

*Third* thing, which I principally intended to speak to. The course which God himself directs to, and which will effectually pacify him. *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* In the handling of which, I shall,

*First*, Consider those several duties which God here requires of us, and upon the performance of which he will be pacified towards us.

*Secondly*, By what ways and means God hath discovered these duties to us, and the goodness of them; *he hath shewed thee, O man, what is good, &c.*

I. We will briefly consider the several duties which God here requires of us, and upon the performance of which he will be pacified towards us. *What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*

It was usual among the *Jews* to reduce all the duties of religion to these three heads, *justice, mercy, and piety*; under the first two, comprehending the duties which we owe to one another; and under the third, the duties which we owe to God.

1. *Justice*. And I was going to tell you what it is, but I considered that every man knows it, as well as any definition can explain it to him. I shall only put you in mind of some of the principal instances of it, and the several virtues comprehended under it. And,

*First*, Justice is concerned in the making of laws, that they be such as are equal and reasonable, useful and beneficial, for the honour of God and religion, and for the publick good of human society; this is a great trust, in the discharge of which, if men be byassed by favour or interest, and drawn aside from the consideration and regard of the publick good, it is a far greater crime, and of worse consequence than any private act of injustice between man and man.

And



And then, justice is also concerned in the due execution of laws; which are the guard of private property, the security of publick peace, and of religion and good manners. And, SERM.  
XLVIII

*Lastly*, In the observance of laws and obedience to them; which is a debt that every man owes to human society.

But more especially justice is concerned in the observance of those laws, whether of God or man, which respect the rights of men, and their mutual commerce and intercourse with one another. That we use honesty and integrity in all our dealings, in opposition to fraud and deceit; truth and fidelity, in opposition to falshood and breach of trust; equity and good conscience, in opposition to all kind of oppression and exaction. These are the principal branches and instances of this great and comprehensive duty of justice; the violation whereof is so much the greater sin, because this virtue is the firmest bond of human society, upon the observation whereof, the peace and happiness of mankind does so much depend.

2. *Mercy*, which does not only signify the inward affection of pity and compassion towards those that are in misery and necessity, but the effects of it, in the actual relief of those whose condition calls for our charitable help and assistance; by feeding the hungry, and cloathing the naked, and visiting the sick, and vindicating the oppressed, and comforting the afflicted, and ministring ease and relief to them if it be in our power. And this is a very lovely virtue, and argues more goodness in men than mere *justice* doth. For *justice* is a strict debt; but *mercy* is favour and kindness. And this perhaps may be the reason of the different expressions in the text, that when God barely commands us *to do justly*, he requires we should *love mercy*, that is, take a particular pleasure and delight in the exercise of this virtue, which is so proper and agreeable to mankind, that we commonly call it *humanity*, giving it its

SERM. name from our very nature. In short, it is so excellent a virtue, that I should be very sorry that any religion should be able to pretend to the practice of it more than our own.

3. *Piety; to walk humbly with thy God. To walk humbly in the fear of the Lord*; so the *Chaldee* paraphrase renders these words. And this phrase may comprehend all those acts of religion which refer immediately to God; a firm belief of his being and perfections; an awful sense of him, as the dread Sovereign and righteous Judge of the world; a due regard to his service, and a reverent behaviour of ourselves towards him in all acts of worship and religion, in opposition to Atheism and a prophane neglect and contempt of God and religion; a new and monstrous kind of impiety! which of late years hath broke in upon us, and got head among us, not only contrary to the example of former ages, but in despite of the very genius and temper of the nation, which is naturally devout and zealous in religion.

Or else this phrase of *walking humbly with God*, may refer more particularly to the posture and condition of the people of *Israel* at that time, who were fallen under the heavy displeasure of God for their sins. And then the duty required is, that being sensible how highly God hath been offended by us, by the general corruption and vitiousness of the age, which like a Leprosy hath spread itself almost over the whole body of the nation, and by that open lewdness and those insolent impieties which are daily committed amongst us; I say, that being deeply sensible of this, we do with all humility acknowledge our sins to God, and repent of them, and implore his mercy and forgiveness, and resolve by his grace

\* This Sermon was preach'd upon occasion of a publick Fast.

to turn every one from the evil of our ways, and from the wickedness that is in our hands; which God grant we may every one do \* this day according to the pious design and intention, of it. And if we be sincere in this resolution, who can tell but God will turn

turn and repent, and turn away his anger from us, that we perish not. Nay, we have great reason to believe, that he will be pacified towards us. So he hath declared, *Isa. i. 16. Wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow; come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wooll.* But if we continue unreformed, God will say to us, as he does there to the people of Israel, *To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? your calling of assemblies I cannot away with, it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting; and when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; when ye make many prayers, I will not hear.* To which, let me add that excellent saying of the Son of Syrach to this purpose, *Ecclesiast. xxxiv. 25, 26. He that washeth himself after the touching of a dead body, if he touch it again, what availeth his washing? So is it with a man that fasteth for his sins, and goeth again and doth the same things. Who will hear his prayer, or what doth his humbling profit him?*

II. Let us consider by what ways and means God hath made known these duties to us, and the goodness and the obligation of them. *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee?* I shall mention five ways whereby God hath discovered this to us.

1. By a kind of natural instinct.
2. By natural reason.
3. By the general vote and consent of mankind.
4. By external revelation.
5. By the inward dictates and motions of God's Spirit upon the minds of men.

*First*, By a kind of natural instinct, by which I mean a secret impresson upon the minds of men, whereby they are naturally carried to approve some things



SERM. things as good and fit, and to dislike other things,  
 XLVIII. as having a native evil and deformity in them. And

 this I call a *natural instinct*, because it does not seem to proceed so much from the exercise of our reason, as from a natural propension and inclination, like those instincts, which are in brute creatures, of natural affection and care toward their young ones. And that these Inclinations are precedent to all reason and discourse about them, evidently appears by this, that they do put forth themselves every whit as vigorously in young persons, as in those of riper reason; in the rude and ignorant sort of people, as in those who are more polish'd and refin'd. For we see plainly that the young and ignorant have as strong impressions of piety and devotion, as true a sense of gratitude and justice and pity, as the wiser and more knowing part of mankind. A plain indication, that the reason of mankind is prevented by a kind of *natural instinct* and *anticipation* concerning the good or evil, the comeliness or deformity of these things. And though this do not equally extend to all the instances of our duty, yet as to the great lines and essential parts of it, mankind hardly need to consult any other oracle, than the mere propensions and inclinations of their nature; as whether we ought to reverence the divine nature, to be grateful to those who have confer'd benefits upon us, to speak the truth, to be faithful to our promise, to restore that which is committed to us in trust, to pity and relieve those that are in misery, and in all things to do to others as we would have them do to us. And this will further appear, if we consider those two things:

I. That men are naturally innocent or guilty to themselves, according to what they do in these things. So the Apostle tells us, *Rom. ii. 14, 15. When the Gentiles which have not the law, do by nature*

ture the things contained in the law, these having not SERM.  
the law, are a law unto themselves, and do shew the XLVIII.  
effect of the law written in their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts by turns, (that is, according as they do well or ill) accusing or excusing them. There is a secret comfort in innocence, and a strange pleasure and satisfaction in being acquitted by our own minds for what we do. But on the contrary, when we contradict these natural dictates, what uneasiness do we find in our own breasts? Nay even before the fact is committed, our conscience is strangely disquieted at the thoughts of it. When a man does but design to do a bad thing, he is as guilty to himself, as if he had committed it. Of this we have a considerable instance, in the first violence that was offered to nature, *Gen. iv. 6. The Lord said unto Cain, why art thou wroth, and why is thy countenance fallen?* The very thought of that wickedness which he did but then design, did disorder his mind, and make a change in his very countenance. Guilt is the natural concomitant of heinous crimes, which so soon as ever a man commits, his spirit receives a secret wound, which causeth a great deal of smart and anguish. For guilt is restless, and puts the mind of man into an unnatural working and fermentation, never to be settled again but by repentance. *The wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest;* which plainly shews that the mind of man hath a kind of natural sense of good and evil; because whenever we offend against nature, our consciences are touched to the quick, and we receive a sting into our soul, which shoots and pains us, whenever we reflect upon what we have done. I appeal to that witness which every man carries in his breast, whether this be not true.

2. Men are naturally full of hopes and fears, according as they follow or go against these natural dictates. A good conscience is apt to fill men with

SERM. confidence and good hopes. It does not only give  
 XLVIII. ease, but security to the mind of man, against the  
 dread of invisible powers, and the fearful apprehen-  
 sions of a future judgment. Whereas guilt fills  
 men with dismal apprehensions of danger, and con-  
 tinual misgivings concerning their own safety.  
 Thus it was with *Cain* after he had slain his brother;  
*It shall come to pass that every one that findeth me shall*  
*slay me.* Nay, when a man hath done a secret fault,  
 which none can accuse him of, yet then is he haun-  
 ted with the terrors of his own mind, and cannot  
 be secure in his own apprehensions; which plainly  
 shews that men are conscious to themselves, when  
 they do well, and when they do amiss; and that  
 the same *natural instinct* which prompts men to their  
 duty, fills them with good hopes when they have  
 done it, and with secret fears and apprehensions of  
 danger when they have done contrary to it.

*Secondly*, God shews man what is good, by natu-  
 ral reason; and that *two* ways; by the convenience  
 of things to our nature; and by their tendency to  
 our happiness and interest.

*First*, Reason shews us the convenience of things  
 to our nature; and whatever is agreeable to the pri-  
 mitive design and intention of nature, that we call  
*good*; whatever is contrary thereto, we call *evil*.  
 For example, *to honour and love God*. It is natural  
 to honour great power and perfection, and to love  
 goodness wherever it is. So likewise, *gratitude* is  
 natural, to acknowledge benefits receiv'd, and to  
 be ready to requite them, and the contrary is mon-  
 strous, and universally abhorred; and there is no  
 greater sign that any thing is contrary to nature,  
 than if it be detested by the whole kind. It is a-  
 greeable also to nature to be *just*, and *to do to others,*  
*as we would have them do to us*; for this is to make  
 our own natural inclinations and desires the rule of  
 our dealing with others; and *to be merciful*; for no  
 man that hath not divested himself of humanity,  
 can



can be cruel and hard-hearted to others, without feeling a pain in himself. SERM.  
XLVIII.

*Secondly*, Reason shews us the tendency of these things to our happiness and interest. And indeed the notion of *good* and *evil* does commonly refer to the consequences of things, and we call that *good*, which will bring some benefit and advantage to us, and that *evil* which is likely to produce some mischief and inconvenience; and by this rule reason discovers to us that these duties are *good*.

To begin with *piety* towards God. Nothing can more evidently tend to our interest, than to make him our friend, upon whose favour our happiness depends. So likewise for *gratitude*; it is a virtue, to which if nature did not prompt us, our interest would direct us; for every man is ready to place benefits there where he may hope for a thankful return. *Temperance* does apparently conduce to our health, which, next to a good conscience, is the most pleasant and valuable thing in the world; whereas the intemperate man is an open enemy to himself, and continually making assaults upon his own life. *Mercy* and *pity* are not more welcome to others, than they are delightful and beneficial to our selves; for we do not only gratifie our own nature and bowels, by relieving those who are in misery, but we provoke mankind by our example to the like tenderness, and do prudently bespeak the commiseration of others towards us, when it shall be our turn to stand in need of it. And if we be wise enough, our reason will likewise direct us to be *just*, as the surest art of thriving in this world; it gives a man a reputation, which is a powerful advantage in all the affairs of this world; it is the shortest and easiest way of dispatching business, the plainest, and least entangled; and though it be not so *sudden* a way of growing rich, as fraud and oppression: yet it is much *surer* and more *lasting*, and not liable to those

SERM. those terrible back-blows and after-reckonings, to  
XLVIII. which estates got by injustice are.

And natural reason does not only shew us that these things are good, but that *the Lord requires them of us*, that is, that they have the force and obligation of *laws*. For there needs nothing more to make any thing a *law*, than a sufficient declaration, that it is *the will of God*; and this God hath sufficiently signified to mankind by the very frame of our natures, and of those principles and faculties which he hath endu'd us withal; so that whenever we act contrary to these, we plainly disobey the will of him that made us, and violate those laws which he hath enacted in our natures, and written upon our hearts.

And this is all the *law* that the greatest part of mankind were under, before the revelation of the Gospel. From *Adam* to *Moses*, the world was almost solely governed by the *natural law*; which seems to be the meaning of that hard text, *Rom. v. 13. For until the law sin was in the world*, that is before the *law* of *Moses* was given, men were capable of offending against some *other law*, for otherwise sin could not have been imputed to them, for *sin is not imputed where there is no law*. And then it follows; *Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression*; that is, during that space from *Adam* to *Moses*, men sinned against the *natural law*, and were liable to death upon that account, though they had not offended against an express revelation from God, as *Adam* had done; for *that* the Apostle seems to mean, by *sinning after the similitude of Adam's transgression*.

Thirdly, God hath shewn us what is good by the general vote and consent of mankind. Not that all mankind do agree concerning virtue and vice; but that as to the greater duties of *piety, justice, mercy,*

mercy, and the like, the exceptions are but few in SERM. comparison, and not enough to infringe a general XLVIII. consent. And of this I shall offer to you this three-fold evidence. ~~~~~

1. That these virtues are generally prais'd and held in esteem by mankind, and the contrary vices generally reprov'd and evil spoken of. Now to praise any thing, is to give testimony to the goodness of it, and to censure any thing, is to declare that we believe it to be evil. And if we consult the history of all ages, we shall find that the things which are generally prais'd in the lives of men, and recommended to the imitation of posterity, are piety, and devotion, gratitude and justice, humanity and charity; and that the contrary to these are marked with ignominy and reproach; the former are commended even in enemies, and the latter are branded even by those who had a kindness for the persons that were guilty of them. So constant hath mankind always been in the commendation of virtue, and in the censure of vice. Nay we find not only those who are virtuous themselves giving their testimony and applause to virtue, but even those who are vicious; not out of love to goodness, but from the conviction of their own minds, and from a secret reverence they bear to the common consent and opinion of mankind. And this is a great testimony, because it is the testimony of an enemy extorted by the mere light and force of truth.

And on the contrary; nothing is more ordinary than for *vice to reprove sin*, and to hear men condemn the like, or the same things in others, which they allow in themselves. And this is a clear evidence, that vice is generally condemned by mankind, that many men condemn it in themselves; and those who are so kind as to spare themselves, are very quick-sighted to spy a fault in any body else,  
and



SERM. and will censure a bad action done by another, with  
 XLVIII. as much freedom and impartiality, as the most virtuous man in the world.

And to this consent of mankind about virtue and vice, the Scripture frequently appeals. As when it commands us *to provide thing honest in the sight of all men; and by well doing to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men*; intimating that there are some things so confessedly good, and owned to be such by so general a vote of mankind, that the worst of men have not the face to open their mouths against them. And it is made the character of a virtuous action, if it be *lovely and commendable, of good report*. Philip. 4. 8. *Whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, make account of these things*; intimating to us, that mankind do generally concur in the praise and commendation of what is virtuous.

2. Men do generally glory and stand upon their innocence, when they do virtuously; but are ashamed and out of countenance, when they do the contrary. Now glory and shame are nothing else but an appeal to the judgment of others concerning the good or evil of our actions. There are indeed some such monsters as are impudent in their impieties, but these are but few in comparison. Generally mankind is modest, the greatest part of those who do evil are apt to blush at their own faults, and to confess them in their countenance, which is an acknowledgment that they are not only guilty to themselves that they have done amiss, but that they are apprehensive that others think so. For guilt is a passion respecting ourselves, but shame regards others. Now it is a sign of shame, that men love to conceal their faults from others, and commit them secretly, in the dark and without witnesses, and are afraid even of a child or a fool: Or if they be discovered in them, they are solicitous to excuse and extenuate them, and ready to lay the fault upon any body else, or to transfer their

their guilt, or as much of it as they can, upon others. SERM.  
All which are certain tokens, that men are not only XLVIII.  
naturally guilty to themselves, when they commit a  
fault; but that they are sensible also what opinions o-  
thers have of these things.

And on the contrary, men are apt to stand upon their justification, and to glory when they have done well. The conscience of a man's own virtue and integrity, lifts up his head and gives him confidence before others, because he is satisfied they have a good opinion of his actions. What a good face does a man naturally set upon a good deed? And how does he sneak, when he hath done wickedly, being sensible that he is condemned by others, as well as by himself? No man is afraid of being upbraided for having dealt honestly or kindly with others, nor does account it any calumny or reproach, to have it reported of him, that he is a sober and chaste man. No man blusheth, when he meets a man with whom he hath kept his word, and discharged his trust: but every man is apt to do so, when he meets one with whom he has dealt dishonestly, or who knows some notorious crime by him.

3. Vice is generally forbidden and punish'd by human laws: but against the contrary virtues there never was any law. Some vices are so manifestly evil in themselves, or so mischievous to human society, that the laws of most nations have taken care to discountenance them by severe penalties. Scarce any nation was ever so barbarous, as not to maintain and vindicate the honour of their Gods and religion by publick laws. Murder and adultery, rebellion and sedition, perjury and breach of trust, fraud and oppression, are vices severely prohibited by the laws of most nations. A clear indication, what opinion the generality of mankind, and the wisdom of nations have always had of these things.

But now against the contrary virtues there never was any law. No man was ever impeach'd for *living soberly,*  
*righteously,*

SERM. *righteously, and godly in this present world.* A plain  
 XLVIII. acknowledgment, that mankind always thought  
 them good, and never were sensible of the inconvenience of them; for had they been so, they would have provided against them by laws. This St. Paul takes notice of as a great commendation of the christian virtues; *The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, kindness, fidelity, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law;* the greatest evidence that could be given, that these things are unquestionably good in the esteem of mankind, *against such there is no law.* As if he had said, turn over the law of *Moses*, search those of *Athens*, and *Sparta*, and the *twelve tables* of the *Romans*, and those innumerable laws that have been added since; and you shall not in any of them find any of those virtues that I have mentioned, condemned and forbidden. A clear evidence that mankind never took any exception against them, but are generally agreed about the goodness of them.

*Fourthly*, God hath shewn us what is good by external revelation. In former ages of the world, God revealed his will to particular persons in an extraordinary manner, and more especially to the nation of the *Jews*, the rest of the world being in a great measure left to the conduct of natural light. But in these latter ages he hath made publick revelation of his will by his Son. And this as to the matter of our duty, is the same in substance with the law of nature; for our Saviour comprehends all under these two general heads, *the love of God*, and *of our neighbour*. The Apostle reduceth all to three, *sobriety, justice, and piety*; *The grace of God that brings salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.* So that if we believe the Apostle, the Gospel teacheth us the very same things which nature dictated to men before; only it hath made a more perfect discovery of them.

So



So that whatever was doubtful and obscure before, SERM.  
is now certain and plain; the duties are still the XLVIII.  
same, only it offers us more powerful arguments,  
and a greater assistance to the performance of those  
duties; so that we may now much better say, than  
the Prophet could in his days, *He hath shewed thee,  
O man, what is good; and what it is that the Lord  
requires of thee.*

*Fifthly* and *lastly*, God shews us what is good by  
the motions of his spirit upon the minds of men.  
This the scripture assures us of, and good men have  
experience more especially of it; though it be hard  
to give an account of it, and to say what motions  
are from the spirit of God, and what from our own  
minds; for *as the wind blows where it listeth, and we  
hear the sound of it, but know not whence it comes nor  
whither it goes*; so are the operations of the spirit of  
God upon the minds of men, secret and impercep-  
tible.

And thus I have done with the *three* things I  
propounded to speak to. All that now remains, is  
to make some *inferences* from what hath been said,  
by way of application.

*First*, seeing God hath so abundantly provided  
that we should know our duty, we are altogether  
inexcusable, if we do not do it. Because *he hath  
shewed thee, O man, what is good, and what the Lord  
requires of thee*; therefore *thou art inexcusable, O man  
whosoever thou art*, who livest in a contradiction to  
this light. God hath acquainted us with our duty,  
by such ways as may most effectually both direct and  
engage us to the practice of it; we are prompted to  
it by a kind of natural instinct, and strong impressi-  
ons upon our minds of the difference of good and e-  
vil; we are led to the knowledge, and urged to the  
practice of it, by our nature, and by our reason, and  
by our interest, and by that which is commonly ve-  
ry prevalent among men, the general voice and con-  
sent of mankind; and by the most powerful and go-  
verning

SERM. XLVIII. governing passions in human nature, by hope and by fear, and by shame; by the prospect of advantage, by the apprehension of danger, and by the sense of honour; and to take away all possible excuse of ignorance from us, by an express revelation from God, the clearest and most perfect that ever was made to the world. So that whenever we do contrary to our duty, in any of these great instances, we offend against all these, and do in the highest degree fall under the heavy sentence of our Saviour, *this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light.*

Secondly, You see hence what are the great duties of religion, which God mainly requires of us, and how reasonable they are; *piety* towards God, and *justice* and *charity* towards men; the knowledge whereof is planted in our nature, and grows up with our reason. And these are things which are unquestionably *good*, and against which we can have no exception; things that were never reprov'd, nor found fault with by mankind, neither our nature nor our reason riseth up against them, or dictates any thing to the contrary. We have all the obligation, and we have all the encouragement to them, and are secure on all hands in the practice of them. In the doing of these things, there is no danger to us from the laws of men, no fear of displeasure from God, no offence or sting from our own minds.

And these things, which are so agreeable to our nature, and our reason, and our interest, are the great things which our religion requires of us, more valuable in themselves and more acceptable to God than *whole burnt offerings and sacrifices*, more than *thousands of rams, and ten thousands of rivers of oyl*; more than if we offered to him *all the beasts of the forest, and the cattle upon a thousand hills*. We are not to neglect any institution of God; but above all, we are to secure the observance of those great duties to which we are directed by our very nature, and tyed

tyed by the surest and most sacred of all other laws, SERM.  
those which God hath riveted in our souls, and writ- XLVIII.  
ten upon our hearts: and that mankind might have  
no pretence left to excuse them from those, the Chri-  
stian religion hath set us free from these many posi-  
tive and outward observances, that the *Jewish* reli-  
gion was incumber'd withal; that we might be  
wholly intent upon these great duties, and mind no-  
thing in comparison of the real and substantial vir-  
tues of a good life.

*Thirdly*, You see, in the last place, what is the  
best way to appease the displeasure of God towards a  
sinful nation. God seems to have as great a contro-  
versy with us, as he had with the people of *Israel*,  
and his wrath is of late years most visibly gone out a-  
gainst us; and proportionably to the full measure of  
our sins, it hath been poured out upon us in full vials.  
How have the judgments of God followed us? And  
how close have they followed one another? What fear-  
ful calamities have our eyes seen? enough to make  
the ears of every one that hears them to tingle.  
What terrible and hazardous wars have we been en-  
gaged in? What a raging pestilence did God send  
among us, that swept away thousands, and ten  
thousands in our streets; What a dreadful and fatal  
fire, that was not to be checked and resisted in its  
course, till it had laid in ashes one of the greatest and  
riches cities in the world? What unseasonable wea-  
ther have we had of late? as if for the wickedness of  
men upon the earth, the very *ordinances of heaven*  
were *changed*, and *summer*, and *winter*, *seed-time*, and  
*harvest*, had forgotten their *appointed seasons*. And  
which is more and sadder than all this, what dan-  
gerous attempts have been made upon our religion,  
by the restless adversaries of it?

And now surely, *after all this is come upon us for*  
*our sins*, it is time for us to look up to him that smites  
us, and to think of taking up this quarrel. 'Tis time  
to inquire as they do in the text, *wherewithal shall*



SERM. *we come before the Lord, and bow ourselves before the*  
 XLVIII. *high God?* And we are apt to take the same course  
 they did, to endeavour to appease God by some external devotion. We have now betaken ourselves to prayer and fasting, and 'twas very fit, nay necessary we should so do; but let us not think this is all God expects from us. These are but a *means* to to a further *end*, to oblige us for the future to the practice of a good life. The outward profession of religion is not lost amongst us, there appears still in men a great and commendable zeal for the reformed religion, and there hath been too much occasion for it; but that which God chiefly expects from us, is reform'd lives. Piety and virtue are in a great measure gone from among us, the manners of men are strangely corrupted, *the great and weighty things of the law* are neglected, *justice and mercy, temperance and chastity, truth and fidelity*, so that we may take up David's complaint, *Help Lord! for the righteous man ceaseth, for the faithful fail from among the children of men.*

And till the nation be brought back to a sober sense of religion, from an airy and phantastical piety, to real and unaffected devotion, and from a factious contention about things indifferent, to the serious practice of what is necessary; from our violent hates and animosities, to a more peaceable temper and by a mutual condescension on all sides, to a nearer and stronger union among ourselves 'till we recover in some measure our ancient virtue and integrity of manners, we have reason to fear, that God will still have a controversy with us, notwithstanding all our noise and zeal about religion.

This is the true, this is the only course to appease the indignation of God, and to draw down his favour and blessing upon a poor distracted and gasping nation. *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly,*

*justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy* SERM.  
XLVIII.  
*God?*

I have but one word more, and that is to put you presently upon the practice of one of these duties that I have been persuading you to, and that is *mercy*, and *alms to the poor*. If what I have already said, have had its effect upon you, I need not use any other arguments; if it have not, I have hardly the heart to use any. I shall only put you in mind again, that God values this above all our external devotion, *he will have mercy rather than sacrifice*; that this is the way to find mercy with God, and to have our prayers speed in heaven; and without this, all our fasting and humiliation signifies nothing. And to this purpose I will only read to you those plain and persuasive words of the prophet, which do so fully declare unto us the whole duty of this day, and particularly urge us to this of charity, *Isa. lviii. 5. 6, 7, 8, 9. Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day unto the Lord? Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burthens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thy self from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy salvation shall spring forth speedily, and thy righteousness shall go before thee, and the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward. Then thou shalt call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, here I am.*

# SERMON XLIX

Instituted Religion not intended to undermine Natural.

x MATTHEW ix. 13

*But go ye and learn what that meaneth; I will have Mercy, and not Sacrifice.*

SERM.  
XLIX.

ONE of the most successful attempts that have been made upon religion, by the Devil and his instruments, hath been by setting the laws of God at variance with themselves, and by dashing the several parts of religion, and the two tables of the law against one another, to break all in pieces; and under a pretence of advancing that part of religion which is *instituted* and *revealed*, to undermine and destroy that which is *natural*, and of primary obligation.

To manifest and lay open the mischievous consequences of this design, I shall at this time (by God's assistance) endeavour to make out these *two* things.

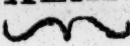
*First*, That *natural* religion is the foundation of all *instituted* and *revealed* religion.

*Secondly*, That no *revealed* or *instituted* religion was ever designed to take away the obligation of *natural* duties, but to confirm and establish them.

And to this purpose, I have chosen these words of our Saviour for the foundation of my following discourse; *but go ye and learn, what that meaneth; I will have mercy, and not sacrifice.* The occasion of which words was briefly this; the *Pharisees* found fault with him for keeping company, and eating with *publicans* and *sinners*. He owns the thing which they object-

ed



ed to him, and endeavours to vindicate himself from SERM.  
any crime or fault in so doing; and that, these two XLIX.  
ways, 

1. By telling them, that it was allow'd to a physician, and proper for his office and profession, to converse with the sick, in order to their cure and recovery. He may abstain, if he pleaseth, from the conversation of others; but the sick have need of him, and are his proper care, and his business and employment lies among them; *he said unto them, they that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*; they who were already good, needed not to be call'd upon to amend and reform their lives; and they that were so conceited of their own righteousness, as the *Pharisees* were, and so confident that they were sound and whole, would not admit of a physician, and thereby render'd themselves incapable of cure; and therefore he did not apply himself to them; but to the publicans and sinners, who were acknowledged on all hands, both by themselves and others, to be bad men; so that it could not be deny'd to be the proper work of a spiritual physician to converse with such persons.

2. By endeavouring to convince them of their ignorance of the true nature of religion, and of the rank and order of the several duties thereby required; *but go ye and learn what that meaneth; I will have mercy and not sacrifice*; which saying is quoted by him out of the prophet *Hosea*, chap. vi. 6. *I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings*; which text our Saviour cites and applies upon two several occasions; the considering and comparing of which, will give full light to the true meaning of it.

The first is here in the text, upon occasion of the *Pharisees* finding fault with him, for conversing with *Publicans* and sinners; the other is, *Matth. xii. 7.* where the *Pharisees* blaming the disciples of our Sa-

SERM. XLIX. viour for plucking the aers of corn on the Sabbath day, our Saviour tells them. *If ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless*; that is, if they had understood the true nature of religion, and what duties of it are chiefly and in the first place to be regarded, they would not have been so forward to censure this action of his Disciples.

So that the plain meaning of this saying is this, that in comparing the parts of religion and the obligation of duties together, those duties which are of *moral* and *natural* obligation are most valu'd by God, and ought to take place of those which are *positive* and *ritual*. *I will have mercy and not sacrifice*, that is, *rather than sacrifice*, according to the true meaning of this *Hebrew* phrase, which is to be understood in a comparative sense, as is evident from the text itself, in *Hosea*, *I desired mercy and not sacrifice*; and the knowledge of God *rather than burnt offerings*; if they cannot be observed together, let *sacrifice* be neglected, and the work of *mercy* be done.

And the reason of this seems very plain; because *shewing mercy*, or *doing good* in any kind is a prime instance of those *moral* duties, which do *naturally* and *perpetually* oblige; but *sacrifice* is an instance of *positive* and *ritual* observances, and one of the chief of the kind: so that when *moral* duties, and *ritual* observances come in competition, and do clash with one another, the observation of a *rite*, or *positive institution*, is to give way to a *moral* duty; and it is no sin in that case to neglect the observation of such a *rite*, yea though it were commanded and appointed by God himself. And though this may seem to be a breach of the *letter* of the law; yet it is according to the true *mind* and *meaning* of the law; it being a tacit condition implied in all laws of a *ritual* and *positive* nature, *provided the observance of them be not to the hindrance and prejudice of any duty, which is* of

of a higher and better nature ; in that case the obligation of it does for that time give way and is suspended. SERM. XLIX.

And this will appear to be the true meaning of of this rule, by comparing more particularly the instances to which our Saviour applies it. His disciples passing through the corn on the sabbath day, and being hungry, pluckt the ears and did eat ; this our Saviour does justify to be no breach of the law of the Sabbath ; because in that case, and in such circumstances, it did not oblige : for the disciples being call'd to attend upon our Saviour, to be instructed by him in the things which concern'd the kingdom of God, that is, in the doctrine of the Gospel, which they were to publish to the world, this attendance hindred them from making necessary provisions against the Sabbath, they, in obedience to their master, being intent upon a better work ; but that they might not starve, the necessities of nature must be provided for ; and therefore it was fit, that the law of the Sabbath, which was but *positive* and *ritual*, should give way to an act of *mercy* and *self-preservation* ; if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.

And the reason is the same as to any *instrumental* part of religion, by which I mean any thing which may be a means to promote piety and goodness ; as prayer, hearing the word of God, keeping good company, and avoiding bad ; the duties of this kind, our Saviour here in the text (where he likewise applies this rule,) compares with *moral* duties. To avoid the company of vicious and wicked persons, is a good means to preserve men from the contagion of their vices, and was always esteemed a duty among prudent men, both Jews and Heathens, and is no wise disallow'd by our Saviour : but yet not so a duty, as to hinder a greater duty, nor so strictly and perversely to be insisted upon, as if one ought not to converse with bad men in any case, or upon any account, no not for so great and good an end as to



SERM. reclaim them from their vices. In this case we ought  
 XLIX. to consider, that our first and highest obligation is to  
 moral duties, comprehended under *the love of God*  
*and our neighbour*; among which one of the chief is  
 to do good to men, and to shew mercy and pity to  
 those that are in misery; and the greatest good that  
 one man can do to another, is to be instrumental to  
 reclaim him from the evil and error of his way; be-  
 cause this is *to save his soul from death*; and we can-  
 not imagine that God ever intended, by any rule of  
*prudence*, or *positive* constitution of the Jewish law,  
 so to forbid their accompanying with bad and scan-  
 dalous men, that it should be unlawful to converse  
 with them in order to their recovery and amend-  
 ment; *go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have*  
*mercy and not sacrifice.*

And St. Paul was of the same mind in the pre-  
 cepts he gives concerning avoiding the company of  
 scandalous Christians, 2 *Thess.* iii. 14, 15. *And if*  
*any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man,*  
*and have no company with him, that he may be asham-*  
*ed; yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as*  
*a brother.* St. Paul qualifies his precept, lest Chri-  
 stians should mistake it, and fall into the Jewish ex-  
 trem, not to converse with those whom they esteem'd  
 scandalous and wicked, upon any account whatsoever,  
 no not in order to their amendment and reformation.  
 The bond of intimacy and friendship with bad men  
 ought to be broken, and yet the bond of common  
 humanity may be as strong as ever. It is one thing  
 to discountenance bad men, to bring them to shame,  
 and a sense of their fault; and quite another thing  
 to abandon them to ruin; and even in case of noto-  
 rious heresy, or wickedness of life, it is one thing  
 to cut them off from the society and communion of  
 Christians; and quite another, to cut them off from  
 human society, to cut their throats, and to extirpate  
 them out of the world.

And

And yet the matter was carried thus far by the furious zeal of the Jews, when Christianity first appeared in the world; they thought that no mercy in such cases was the best that could be done, and the best sacrifice that could be offered to Almighty God; and this pattern hath been since, not only closely follow'd, but out-done by the doctrines and practices of the church of *Rome*; as we have too much reason to remember upon \* *this day*.

\* Preached  
on Nov. 5.  
1688.

But to proceed in the farther explication of the text, the meaning whereof, in short is this; that the *ritual* and *instrumental* parts of religion, and all laws and duties concerning them, are of less value and esteem with God, than those which are of a *moral* nature, especially the great duties and offices of *piety* and *humanity*, of *the love of God*, and of *our neighbour*. And if we consider the matter well, we shall see the reason of it to be very plain; because *natural* and *moral* duties are approv'd of God, for themselves and for their own sake, upon account of their own *natural* and *intrinsical* goodness; but the *ritual* and *instrumental* parts of religion are only pleasing to God in order to these, and so far as they tend to beget and promote them in us; they are not *naturally* good in themselves, but are *instituted* and *appointed* by God for the sake of the other; and therefore great reason there is that they should be subordinate, and give way to them, when they come in competition with one another.

For this is a known rule, which takes place in all laws, that laws of less importance should give way to those that are of greater; *quoties leges ex circumstantiâ colliduntur, ita ut utraque servari non potest, servanda est lex potior*: "Whenever two laws happen to be in such circumstances as to clash with one another, so that both of them cannot be observ'd, that law which is better and of greater consequence is to be kept." And *Tully* gives much the same rule in this matter. "In comparing of laws (says he) we  
" are

SERM. “are to consider which law is most useful, and just,  
 XLIX. “and reasonable to be observ’d.” From whence it  
 will follow, that when two laws, or more, or how  
 many soever they be, cannot be observ’d, because  
 they clash with one another? *ea maxime conservan-*  
*da putetur, quæ ad maximas res pertinere videatur:*  
 “It is reasonable that that law should be observed,  
 “which is of greatest moment and concernment.”

By what hath been said, we may learn what is the  
 meaning of this saying, which our Saviour more  
 than once cites out of the Prophet, *I will have*  
*mercy and not sacrifice.*

From the words thus explained, I shall take oc-  
 casion to prosecute the *two* propositions which I  
 mentioned before; namely,

*First*, That *natural* religion is the foundation of  
*instituted* and *revealed* religion.

*Secondly*, That no *instituted* religion was ever de-  
 sign’d to take away the obligation of *natural* du-  
 ties; but is intended to establish and confirm them.  
 And both these are sufficiently grounded in the rea-  
 son of our Saviour’s discourse from this rule, *I will*  
*have mercy, and not sacrifice.*

I. That *natural* religion is the foundation of *insti-*  
*tuted* and *revealed* religion; and all *revealed* religi-  
 on does suppose, and take for granted, the clear and  
 undoubted principles and precepts of *natural* reli-  
 gion, and builds upon them. By *natural* religion,  
 I mean obedience to the *natural law*, and the per-  
 formance of such duties as *natural light*, without  
 any *express* and *supernatural revelation*, doth dictate  
 to men. These lie at the bottom of all religion, and  
 are the great and fundamental duties which God re-  
 quires of all mankind; as, that we should love God,  
 and behave ourselves reverently towards him; that  
 we should believe his revelations; and testify our  
 dependance upon him, by imploring his aid and di-  
 rection in all our necessities and distresses; and ac-  
 knowledge our obligations to him for all the bles-  
 sings



fings and benefits which we receive; that we should moderate our appetites, in reference to the pleasures and enjoyments of this world, and use them temperately and chafly; that we should be juft and upright in all our dealings with one another; true to our word, and faithful to our trust; and in all our words and actions obferve that equity towards others, which we defire they fhould ufe towards us; that we fhould be kind, and charitable, merciful, and compaffionate one towards another; ready to do good to all, and apt not only to pity, but to relieve them in their mifery and neceffity. Thefe, and fuch like, are thofe which we call *moral* duties; and they are of *eternal* and *perpetual* obligation, becaufe they do *naturally* oblige, without any *particular* and *exprefs revelation* from God. And thefe are the foundation of *revealed* and *inftituted* religion, and all *revealed* religion does fuppofe them, and build upon them; for all *revelation* from God, fuppofeth us to be *men*, and alters nothing of thofe duties to which we were *naturally obliged* before. And this will clearly appear if we confider thefe *three* things;

*First*, That the fcripture every where fpeaks of thefe, as the main and fundamental duties of the *Jewifh* religion.

*Secondly*, That no *inftituted* fervice of God, no *positive* part of religion, was ever acceptable to him, when thefe were neglected.

*Thirdly*, That the great defign of the *chriitian* religion, was to reftore and reinforce the practice of the *natural* law.

1. That the fcripture every where fpeaks of thefe as the main and fundamental duties of the *Jewifh* religion. When our Saviour was ask'd *which was the firft and great commandment of the law*; he answer'd, *Thou fhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy foul, and with all thy ftrength; and thou fhalt love thy neighbour as thy felf.* One would

SERM. would have expected he would have given quite another answer, and have pitched upon some of those things which were so much magnified among the *Jews*, and which they laid so much weight upon; that he should have instanced in *sacrifice*, or *circumcision*, or the law of the *Sabbath*: but he overlooks all these as inconsiderable in comparison, and instances only in those two great heads of moral duty, *the love of God, and our neighbour*; which are of *natural* and *perpetual* obligation, and comprehend under them all other *moral* duties.

And these are those which our Saviour calls *the law and the Prophets*, and which he says *he came not to destroy, but to fulfill*, Matt. v. 17, 18, 19, 20. *Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the Prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill: for verily I say unto you, 'till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be call'd the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*

That our Saviour doth not here speak of the *judicial* or *ceremonial* law of the *Jews*, but of the duties of the *moral* law, will, I think, be very plain, from these following considerations.

*First*, That the *judicial* or *ceremonial* laws of the *Jews* were to *pass away*, and did so, not long after; but this law, which our Saviour speaks of, was to be *perpetual* and *immutable*; for he tells us, *that heaven and earth should pass away, but one jot or one tittle of this law should not pass.*

*Secondly*, The observation of the law our Saviour speaks of, consisted in such things as the Scribes and Pharisees neglected; for he tells his disciples, upon this

this occasion, *that except their righteousness did exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, they should in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.* SERM. XLIX.

But now the Scribes and Pharisees were the most accurate and punctual people in the world, in observing the precepts of the *judicial and ceremonial law*; they were so far from taking away any thing from these observances, that they had added to them, and enlarg'd them, by innumerable traditions of their own; so exact were they, that they would *pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin*, as our Saviour observes; but then they were extremely defective in *moral duties*; they were unnatural to their parents, and would pretend that their estates were consecrated to God, that under this pretence of *positive religion*, they might excuse themselves from a *natural duty*, and let their parents starve for God's sake; they were covetous, and unjust, and *devoured widows houses*; in a word, our Saviour tells us, they neglected *the weightier matters of the law, mercy, judgment, and the love of God, and keeping faith with men*; so that it is in these things, that our Saviour means, that *our righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, viz. in the practice of moral duties*, which were neglected by them; and consequently 'tis the *moral law* which our Saviour came to confirm and establish.

*Thirdly*, If we consider the instances which our Saviour gives in his following discourse, by which we may best judge what he means. He instances in *murder, and adultery, and perjury*, which are undoubtedly forbidden by the *natural law*; and then he instances in several permissions which were indulged to them for the hardness of their hearts, but yet did intrench upon the dictates of right reason, and the first and original constitution of things; as the permission of *divorce* upon every slight occasion, and of *revenge, and retaliation of injuries*.

*Fourthly*,



SERM.

XLIX

*Fourthly*, If we consider that by *the law and the Prophets*, our Saviour means that which was principally design'd and ultimately intended by them; which was the observation of *moral* duties; which as they were written in the two Tables by the immediate finger of God himself, so are chiefly inculcated by the prophets. And so we find this phrase of *the law and the Prophets* elsewhere used by our Saviour, when he mentions that great rule of equity, that *we should do to others as we would have them do to us*. Matt. vii. 12. *Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that Men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the Prophets*. But how was *this the law and the Prophets*, when this rule was never so much as mentioned in either? our Saviour means, that this is the foundation of all those duties of *justice* and *mercy*, which are so much inculcated in *the law and the prophets*.

So that our Saviour makes the observation of *moral* duties to be the principal design of the *Jewish* law, and as is were the foundation of it, and therefore he calls *moral* duties, τὰ βαρύτερα τῶ νόμου, *the weightier matters of the law*, Matth. xxiii. 23. But ye (says he to the Scribes and Pharisees) *have neglected the weightier things of the law, judgment, and mercy, and fidelity*. The Scribes and Pharisees busied themselves chiefly about *ritual* observances; but our Saviour tells them, that *those other* were the most considerable and important duties of the law, and lay at the bottom of the *Jewish* religion. And much the same enumeration the prophet makes, where he compares *sacrifices* and these *moral* duties together, Mic. vi. 6, 7, 8. *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow my self before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oyl? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? he hath shewed thee, O man,*

man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require SERM.  
XLIX.  
of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? he had requir'd sacrifices, but had no regard to them in comparison with these.

II. No instituted service of God, no positive part of religion whatsoever, was ever acceptable to God, when moral duties were neglected; nay, so far from being acceptable to him, that he rejects them with disdain and abhorrence. To this purpose there are almost innumerable passages in the prophets, *Isa. i. 11, &c.* To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? when ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hands, to tread my courts? bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination to me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting; and when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: when you make many prayers, I will not hear. What is the reason of all this? because they were defective in the moral duties of religion; so it follows; your hands are full of blood; wash ye, make ye clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow; come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord; implying that till they had respect to moral duties, all their external worship and sacrifices signified nothing. And so likewise, *Isa. lxvi. 3.* he tells them that nothing could be more abominable than their sacrifices, so long as they allow'd themselves in wicked practices; *he that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; and he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol; yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations.* And to mention but one text more

SERM. out of the old Testament, *Jer. vii. 4, 5. Trust ye not XLIX. in lying words, saying, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord the temple of the Lord are these. Thoroughly amend your ways and your doings, thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbour; oppress not the stranger, the fatherless and the widow, and shed not innocent blood. If they did not practice these duties, and forbear those sins, all the reverence for the temple and the worship of God signifies nothing. You see in the Jewish religion what it was that was acceptable to God for its self and its own sake, viz. the practice of moral duties; and that all instituted religion, that did not promote and further these, or was destitute of them, was abominable to God. And under the gospel our Saviour prefers a moral duty before any gift we can offer to God, and will have it to take place, Mat. v. 23, 24. If thou bring thy gift unto the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.*

But it should seem by this, and what hath been said before, that God prefers goodness and righteousness to men, before his own worship: and obedience to the precepts of the *second* table, before obedience to those of the *first*.

But this does not seem so; all that can be collected from this passage of our Saviour, or any thing that hath been already said, are only these *two* things.

1. That God prefers the practice of the *moral* duties of the *second* table, before any *instituted* worship, such as sacrifice was; and before obedience to the laws of religion, which are meerly *positive*, tho' they do immediately concern the worship of God.

2. That if we neglect the duties of the *second* table, of *goodness* and *righteousness* towards men, God will not accept of our obedience to the precepts of the *first*, nor of any act of religious worship



ship that we can perform, This our Saviour means SERM.  
 when he says, *leave there thy gift before the altar*, XLIX.  
*first be reconciled to thy brother, then come and offer*  
*thy gift*; intimating that so long as we bear a re-  
 vengeful mind towards our brethren, God will not  
 accept of any gift or sacrifice that we can offer to  
 him; or indeed of any act of religious worship that  
 we can perform.

for if we love not  
 our brother whom  
 we have seen; how  
 can we love God  
 whom we have not  
 seen. —

Thirdly, the great design of the christian religion  
 is to restore and reinforce the practice of the natural  
 law, or, which is all one, of moral duties; and  
 therefore our Saviour begins his first sermon, by  
 promising *blessedness* to the practice of *these* duties;  
 of *purity*, and *meekness*, and *righteousness*, and *peace-*  
*ableness*, and *mercifulness*, and *patience*, and *submission*  
 to the will of God under persecutions and suffer-  
 ings for righteousness sake; and tells us (as I shew'd  
 before) that he came not to release men from the  
 practice of *these* duties, but to oblige them thereto  
 more effectually; and as these were *the law and the*  
*prophets*, that is, the main duties and the foundation  
 of the *Jewish* religion, so were they much more to  
 be so of the *Christian*. This the scriptures of the  
 new testament do every where declare to be the  
 great design of the gospel, and the christian religion,  
 to instruct us in these duties, and to engage us effect-  
 ually to the practice of them. In that known and ex-  
 cellent text, *Tit. ii. 11, 12. The grace of God* (which is  
 in and by the doctrine of the gospel) *bath appeared*  
*to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and*  
*worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and*  
*godly in this present world.* And herein St. James  
 tells us, the true nature, and the force and virtue of  
 the christian religion doth consist, *James i. 27. Pure*  
*religion, and undefiled before God and the father is this,*  
*to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction,*  
*and to keep ourselves unspotted from the world.* And  
*chap. iii. 17. The wisdom which is from above* (that  
 is, that heavenly and divine knowledge reveal'd to

SERM. us by the gospel) hath these properties, and is apt  
 XLIX. to produce these effects; *it is first pure, and then*  
 peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy,  
 and of good fruits.

And the planting of these dispositions in us is that which the scripture calls *the new creature*, and *the Image of God*, Eph. iv. 20, &c. The Apostle speaking there of the vices and lusts wherein the Gentiles liv'd, tells Christians that *they* were otherwise instructed by the gospel; *but you have not so learned Christ, if so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus, that ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renew'd in the spirit of your mind, and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness, or, (as the words perhaps may be better render'd) in the holiness of truth; for it immediately follows, wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour.*

And this is that which the Apostle elsewhere makes to be *all in all* in the christian religion. *In Christ Jesus, neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature*, Gal. vi. 15. Which the Apostle in the chapter before expresseth thus; *in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh (or is inspired) by charity.* And yet more expressly, 1 Cor. vii. 19. *Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but the keeping of the commandments of God.* By the comparing of which texts, it appears, that the main thing in Christianity is the practice of *moral duties*, and this is *the new creature*, and this the proper effect of the christian faith to produce these virtues in us. And indeed the great design of the christian religion and every thing in it, of the love of God in giving his Son to die for us, of the  
 pardon

pardon of our sins, and justification in his blood, of all the promises and threatnings of the gospel, and of the assistance therein promised, is to engage and encourage, and enable to the practice of *moral* duties.

And thus I have done with the *First* thing I proposed to speak to, namely, that *natural* religion is the foundation of *instituted* and *revealed* religion; and all *revealed* religion does suppose it, and builds upon it. I proceed to the

*Second*, namely, That no *revealed* and *instituted* religion was ever designed to take away the obligation of *natural* duties, but was intended to confirm and establish them. And this also will be evident, if we consider these *three* things.

1. That all *revealed* religion calls men to the practice of *natural* duties. This the *Jewish* religion did. The first laws which God gave them, and which he distinguished from the rest by writing them in tables of stone with his own finger, where the precepts of the *moral* law. And the great business of the Prophets whom God raised up among them from time to time, was to reprove not so much their defects in their *Sacrifices*, and in the duties of *instituted* worship, as the breach of the *natural* law by their vices and immoralities; and to threaten them with the judgments of God, if they did not reform and amend their faults.

And now under the gospel, the preceptive part of it is almost wholly made up of *moral* duties, namely, those which are comprehended under those *two* great commandments, of *the love of God*, and *our neighbour*. In the christian religion there is very little that is meerly *positive* and *instituted*, besides *the two sacraments*, and *praying to God in the name and mediation of Jesus Christ*.

2. The most perfect revelation that ever God made to mankind (I mean that of the christian religion) doth furnish us with the best helps and ad-



SERM.  
XLIX

vantages for the performance of *moral* duties; it discovers our duty more clearly to us; it offers us the greatest assistance to enable us to the performance of it; it presents us with the most powerful motives and arguments to engage us thereto; so that this revelation of the gospel is so far from weakening the obligation of *natural* duties, that it confirms and strengthens it, and urgeth us more forcibly to the practice of them.

3. The *positive* rites and institutions of *revealed* religion are so far from intrenching upon the laws of *nature*, that they were always design'd to be subordinate and subservient to them; and whenever they come in competition, it is the declar'd will of God, that *positive institutions* should give way to *natural duties*; and this I have shewn to be plainly the meaning of this saying in the text, *I will have mercy, and not sacrifice*. If circumstances be such, that one part of religion must give place, God will have the *ritual* and *instituted* part to give way to that which is *natural* and *moral*.

It is very frequent in scripture, when the duties of *natural* religion, and rites of divine *institution* come in competition, to slight and disparage *these* in comparison of *moral* duties, and to speak of them as things which God hath no pleasure in, and which in comparison of the other he will hardly own that he hath commanded. *When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hands?* Isa. i. 12. *Thou desirest not sacrifice, thou delightest not in burnt-offerings*, Psal. li. 16. *Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oyl? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy?*

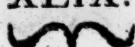
But God no where makes any comparison to the disadvantage of *natural* duties; he never derogated from *them* in any case; he never said *he would have such a thing, and not mercy*, or that *he had rather such a rite*

*a rite of religion should be performed, than that men should do the greatest good, and shew the greatest charity to one another.* It is no where made a question, *will the Lord be pleased that we deal justly every man with his neighbour, and speak the truth one to another? that we be kind and tender-hearted, and ready to forgive? that we be willing to distribute and to give alms to those that are in need?* there is no such question as this put in scripture; nay it is positive in these matters, that *with such sacrifices God is well pleased.* I instance in this virtue more especially of *kindness and compassion*, because it is one of the prime instances of *moral duties*; as *sacrifice* is put for all the *ritual and instituted* part of religion, and this disposition of mind our Saviour makes the root of all *moral duties*; *love is the fulfilling of the law*; and the Apostle speaks of it as the great end and scope of the *gospel*; *the end of the commandment is charity.* And this temper and disposition of mind he advanceth above *knowledge*, and *faith*, and *hope*; *the greatest of these is charity*; and without *this*, he will not allow a man to be any thing in Christianity; *this* he makes our highest perfection and attainment, and that which abides and remains in the future state; *charity never fails.*

*This* our Saviour most effectually recommends to us, both in his doctrine, and by his example; *this* he presseth as a peculiar law of his religion, and the proper mark and character of a disciple. *This* he requires us to exercise towards those who practise the contrary towards us; *to love our enemies, and to do good to them that hate us.* And of *this*, he hath given us the greatest example that ever was; *when we were enemies to him*, he loved us so as hardly ever any man did his friend, so as to lay down his life for us; and he instituted the Sacrament for a memorial of his love to mankind, and to put us in mind how we ought to love one another.

And now the application of what hath been said upon this argument, to the occasion of this day, is

SERM. very obvious, and there are *two* very natural inferences from it.

 *First*, From what hath been said upon this argument, it plainly appears what place *natural* and *moral* duties ought to have in the christian religion; and of all *natural* duties, *mercy*, and *goodness*. This is so primary a duty of human nature, so great and considerable a part of religion, that all *positive institutions* must give way to it; and nothing of that kind can cancel the obligation of it, nor justify the violation of this great and *natural* law. Our blessed Saviour in his religion hath declared nothing to the prejudice of it; but on the contrary hath heightened our obligation to it, as much as is possible, by telling us that *the Son of man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them*.

So that *they know not what manner of spirit they are of who will kill men to do God service*; and to advance his cause and religion in the world, will break through all obligations of *nature*, and *civil society*, and disturb the peace and happiness of mankind.

Nor did our Saviour by any thing in his religion design to release men from the obligation of *natural* and *civil* duties. He had (as one would imagine) as much power as the *Pope*; but yet he depos'd none of the princes of this world, nor did absolve their subjects from their fidelity and obedience to them, for their opposition to his religion; he assumed no such power to himself (no not *in ordine ad spiritualia*) nor, that ever we read of, did he give it to any other. Whence then comes his *pretended* vicar to have this authority? And yet the horrid attempt of *this* day was first design'd, and afterwards carry'd on in prosecution of the *Pope's Bull* of excommunication, and was not so much the effect of the despair and discontent of that party here in *England*, as the natural consequence of their doctrines of *extirpating hereticks* and *deposing kings*, and *absolving subjects from their allegiance to them*.



No zeal for any *positive* institution in religion can justify the violation of the *natural* law, the precepts whereof are of *primary* and *indispensable* obligation. The *Pope's supremacy* is not so clear as the duty of *obedience to civil government*; nor is *transubstantiation* so plainly reveal'd in scripture, as it is both in nature and scripture that we should *do no murder*. And yet how many thousands have been put to death, because they could not understand *this hard word*, and believe *this impossible thing*! And yet if the *supremacy of the Pope* were clearly of divine right, and the doctrine of *transubstantiation* as plain as the institution of the sacrament: yet these being but *positive* matters in religion, there would be no reason to *kill men* for not understanding and believing these things; nay it would be contrary to religion to do it; because the law of *mercy* and *humanity*, which is the law of *nature*, ought not to be violated for the promoting of any *positive institution*; and God hath plainly said, that *he will have mercy rather than sacrifice*; yea rather than *the sacrifice of the mass*, if it were what they pretend it is, *the offering of the natural body and blood of Christ*; because it would be needless: for propitiation of sin being once made by *Christ's offering himself once for all* upon the cross; *there needs no more sacrifice for sin*. Nay, I will go further yet; I had rather never administer the sacrament, nor ever receive it, than take away any man's life about it; because the sacrament is but a *positive* rite and institution of the christian religion, and God prefers *mercy*, which is a duty of *natural* religion, before any *rite* or *institution* whatsoever. Besides, that all acts of malice and cruelty are directly contrary to the particular nature and design of this blessed sacrament, which is to commemorate the sufferings of the Son of God for our sakes, and to give us an example of the greatest love that ever was, and thereby to excite us to the imitation of it.

SERM.

XLIX.

2. What hath been said gives us a right notion and character of that church and religion, which prefers the *positive* rites and *institutions* of religion, and the observance of them, to those duties which are of *natural* and *eternal* obligation, *mercy* and *goodness*, *fidelity* and *justice*; and which for the sake of a *pretended* article of religion, or *rite of worship*, (which if it were certain that they were *revealed*, and *instituted* by God, are yet meerly *positive*) will break the greatest of God's commandments, and teach men so.

It is too plain to be deny'd, that the principles and precepts of *natural* religion were never so effectually undermin'd, and the *morality* of the christian religion never so intolerably corrupted and debauched, by any thing that ever had the face of religion in the world, as by the allowed doctrines and practices of the church of *Rome*, and this out of a blind and furious zeal for some imaginary doctrines and rites of the christian religion, which at the best are of mere *positive institution*, and of the same rank among *Christians*, that *sacrifices* were in the *Jewish* religion. For which we need go no further for an instance, than in the occasion of *this* day's solemnity; upon which day, (about fourscore years ago) there was design'd a *mighty sacrifice* indeed, *the greatest and richest burnt-offering* that ever was pretended to be offer'd up to Almighty God, by those of any religion whatsoever; not *the blood of bulls and goats*, but of a *king*, and *princes*, and *nobles*, more in value than *thousands of rams*, and *ten thousands of rivers of oyl*; than *all the beasts of the forest*, and *the cattle upon a thousand hills*.

Here was a *prodigious sacrifice* indeed, but where was *mercy*? the thing God chiefly desires, and which above all other things is acceptable to him; no *mercy*, not even to those of their own religion, whom these *nice* and *tender Casuists*, after a solemn debate of the case, had resolv'd to involve in the  
same

same common destruction with the rest; rather *no* mercy, than that *this sacrifice* which their *mad zeal* had prompted them to, should be omitted.

To conclude, They that can do such *inhuman* things, and think them to be *religion*, do not understand the nature of it, but had need to be taught *the first rudiments of natural religion*; that *natural duties* are not to be violated upon pretence, no, not for the sake of *positive institutions*; because *natural religion* is the *foundation* of that which is *instituted*; and therefore to violate any *natural duty* for the sake of that which is *instituted*; is for religion to undermine and blow up itself. Let those who *do such things, and teach men so, go and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice.*

# S E R M O N L. The first Sermon on this Text.

Christianity doth not destroy, but perfect the Law of MOSES.

× MATTH. V. 17.

*Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.*

THERE is no saying in the whole Gospel, SERM. which the *Jews* did so frequently object to L. the Christians as this of our blessed Saviour, as if his words and actions were plainly repugnant, and contrary to one another: for when it is evident, say they, that he took away so many ceremo-



SERM. ceremonies, purifications, distinctions of meats, sacrifices, judicial laws, and many other things; yet he says, *he came not to destroy the Law or the Prophets*; so that it is plain, that he did throw down the law of *Moses*, and in so doing contradicted his own saying, that he did not intend *to destroy the Law*. To clear our Saviour's words of this objection, it will be requisite to consider the scope and design of his discourse in this chapter; by which we shall fully understand the sense and meaning of these words in the text.

Our Saviour in this sermon, (which contains the sum and substance of his religion) doth earnestly recommend to his disciples and followers, and strictly enjoins the perfect practice of all goodness and virtue, declaring to them, that he came to bring in and establish that righteousness, which the Jewish religion indeed aimed at, but through the weakness and imperfection of that dispensation, was not able to effect and accomplish. And to take away all suspicion of a design, to contradict the former revelations of God, made to the Jews by *Moses* and the *Prophets*, or to destroy their divine authority, by carrying on a design contrary to them, I say, to prevent any imagination of this kind, he does here in the text expressly declare the contrary; *Think not*, &c. intimating that some either did, or at least might be apt to suspect, that his design was to destroy the obligation of the law, and to undermine the authority of *Moses* and the *Prophets*; to free them from this jealousy, he declares plainly, that he had no such thought and intention, it was far from him.

*I come not to destroy*, καταλῦσαι, *to abrogate*, or *dissolve the law*, to encourage men to the breach and violation of it; for the word is of the same sense with λῦειν, at the 19th v. *Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments*; and with καταργῆσαι, Rom. iii. 31. νόμον ὃν καταργούμεν; *do we then make void the law by faith?* Which is the same question with that of the same

same Apostle, Gal. iii. 21. *Is the law then against* SERM.  
*the promises of God?* that is, *are the law and the gos-* L.  
*pel contrary? do they contradict one another?* So that  
the meaning of our Saviour's declaration is this, that  
he was not come to *dissolve*, and *abrogate*, and *make*  
*void* the law, or to encourage men to the breach of  
it; that the precepts of his religion were in no wise  
contrary to those of the law and the Prophets, did  
not thwart and oppose them, or any ways contradict  
the main design and intention of *the Law and the*  
*Prophets*; that is, of *the Jewish religion*; for so *the*  
*Law and the Prophets* do frequently signify, Matt.  
vii. 12. *Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that*  
*men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is*  
*the Law and the Prophets*; that is, this is the main  
scope and intention of what *your religion* contained  
in *the Law and the Prophets* teacheth, concerning  
your duty to one another. So likewise, Matt. xxii.  
40. *On these two commandments hang all the Law and*  
*the Prophets*; that is, this is the sum of all the duties  
of religion; to these two laws, all that the Jewish  
religion teacheth, may be referr'd. *I am not come to*  
*destroy, but to fulfil*; to carry on the same design  
which was intended by the Jewish religion, and to  
perfect and accomplish it; to supply all the defects  
and weakneses and imperfections of that dispensa-  
tion; this is the plain meaning of this caution and  
declaration of our Saviour's; *Think not, &c.*

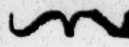
For the clearing of this matter, viz. That the  
design of our Saviour's doctrine and religion is not  
contrary to those former revelations, which God  
made to the *Jews* by *Moses* and the *Prophets*; this  
will evidently appear, whether we consider the pro-  
phesies and predictions of the Old Testament, or  
the laws and precepts therein contained.

First, The prophesies and predictions of the Old  
Testament; our Saviour came not *to contradict* and  
*overthrow* these; but *to fulfil* them. The chief pre-  
dictions of the Law and the Prophets were concern-  
ing

SERM. ing the *Messias*, and his spiritual kingdom. In the  
 L. law it was foretold, *that God would raise to them a*  
 ~~~~~ *Prophet like unto Moses, whom they ought to hear and*  
obey; and to him all the Prophets of the Old Testament
gave witness, foretelling the time of his coming, his
extraction, the manner and circumstances of his birth,
the purity and efficacy of his doctrine, the actions
and miracles of his life, his passion, death and bu-
rial, with the particular circumstances of them, his
resurrection from the dead, and his ascension into
heaven, and exaltation at the right hand of God;
so that this part of the Law and the Prophets he did ac-
complish and fulfil in a most eminent and remarkable
manner; all things that the Prophets had fore-told
concerning the Messias, were punctually made good
in the person, and actions, and sufferings of our
Saviour.

Secondly, As to the laws and precepts of the Jewish religion, the doctrine and the laws of Christianity did not clash with them; nor properly *abrogate* them, and *make them void*, especially as to the *moral* precepts, which were the very life and spirit, the ultimate scope and design of that religion; nay, so far was it from doing so, that the main and proper intention of Christianity, was to *clear*, and *establish* that, which was the main design of *the Law and the Prophets, to perfect the law* in this part, and to *raise* and *advance morality* to its highest pitch, to supply all the defects and imperfections of the Jewish religion, and to make men much better than that weak and imperfect institution was able to do. This was the great design of Christianity; and it is very probable that our Saviour had a principal, if not a sole respect to the precepts of *the moral law*, when he here says, that *he came not to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but to perfect and fulfil them*; as I shall have occasion by and by to shew more at large.

But that we may give a full answer to the objection of the *Jews* against this saying of our Saviour's,
 I shall

I shall shew that he did not come to *thwart* and *con-* SERM.
tradict, and properly to *abrogate* and *make void* the L.
Jewish law, in any part of it, neither the *civil* and 
judicial, nor the *ritual* and *ceremonial*, much less the
moral and *natural* precepts of it. This is more than
I think to be absolutely necessary, to reconcile this
saying of our Saviour with the rest of his doctrine
and actions; 'for tho' he had properly *abrogated* the
ceremonial law, and in no sense *fulfill'd* it; yet, not-
withstanding this, it may be true, that *he came not*
to destroy the Law and the Prophets; that is, to *destroy*
the obligation of moral duties, which he speaks of in
this chapter, and elsewhere declares to be the ulti-
mate scope, the sum and substance of *the Law and*
the Prophets; for if the *ceremonial law* was not de-
sign'd by God to be *perpetual*, but to give way to a
more perfect dispensation; then our Saviour did no
way *thwart* and *contradict* the *law and the Prophets*;
by *abrogating* the *ceremonial law*, at that time, when
God design'd that a period should be put to it. But
yet for the fuller satisfaction to this objection, I shall
shew that our Saviour did not properly *abrogate* any
part of the *Jewish law*, no not the *ritual* and *ceremo-*
niel part of it; but did *fulfil* it.

First, Not their *civil* and *judicial* laws. These in
the original intention of them, were not laws de-
sign'd for mankind, but suited and fitted to the dis-
position and temper, the condition and circumstances
of a particular people and nation; to these our Sa-
viour taught obedience, and paid it himself, and ne-
ver did any thing contrary to them, nor in the least
weaken the obligation of them; but they continu'd
in full force, 'till that nation and commonwealth was
dissolved. So that these laws were no way impeach-
ed or *abrogated* by the christian religion; but they
fell for want of a subject to exercise their power up-
on, and because the people that were to be govern-
ed by them were destroyed or dissipated; and tho'
they neither are, nor ever were obligatory to other
nations,

SERM. nations, as given by *Moses*, and as they were the peculiar laws of a particular nation; yet the natural reason and equity of them, so far as it concern'd mankind, is duly considered and regarded by us, and many of these laws are adopted into the laws of most christian nations. It is plain then, that this part of the Jewish law receiv'd no prejudice by Christianity, but continu'd in full force, so long as that nation and commonwealth lasted, which was to be govern'd by it.

Secondly, As to the *ritual* and *ceremonial* part of the Jewish law, which consisted in circumcision, and purifications, and sacrifices, in distinction of meats, and times, and innumerable other rites and observances; this was not properly *abrogated* and *made void* by the coming of Christ, but *fulfil'd* and *made good* by him. The rites and ceremonies of the law, were the types and shadows of those *future good things* which were promis'd under the Gospel, a kind of a rude draught of a better and more perfect institution, which was design'd, and at last *finished* and *perfected* by the christian religion. This account the Apostle gives of the *legal rites and observances*, Col. ii. 16. 17. *Let no man judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of a holy-day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days, which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ*; that is, he is the *substance* and *reality* of all those things, which were *shadowed* and *figured* by those *legal observances*. And so the Apostle to the *Hebrews* calls the Priests and sacrifices of the law, the *examples* and *shadows* of *heavenly things*, Chap. viii. 5. and so Chap x. 1. *the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things*; that is, being but an *obscure type*, and not a *perfect representation* of the blessings and benefits of the Gospel, which we now have in *truth* and *reality*. Now reason will tell us, that the laws concerning these *types* and *shadows*, were only to continue till the *substance* of the things signified

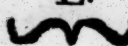
signified by them should come, and that they would be of no longer use, when *that more perfect institution*, which was figur'd by them, should take place, and then they would expire, and become void of themselves, because the reason and use of them ceasing, they must necessarily fall. SERM. L.

But they did not expire immediately upon the coming of Christ, and therefore he himself submitted to these laws, so long as they continued in force; he was circumcised, and presented in the temple, and perform'd all other rites requir'd by the law, *that first covenant* to which these laws and ordinances belong'd, continuing in force till the ratification of *the second covenant* by the death of Christ, and then these laws expir'd, or rather were *fulfill'd* and had their accomplishment in the sacrifice of Christ, which made all the sacrifices and other rights of the Jewish religion needless, and of no use for the future; Christ having by this *one sacrifice of himself*, perfected for ever them that are sanctified, as the same Apostle speaks, *Heb. x. 14.* So that Christ did not properly *abrogate* and *repeal* those *ritual* and *ceremonial* laws; but they having continu'd as long as they were design'd to do, and there was any use of them, they *abated* and *ceased* of themselves.

And that the death of Christ was the time of their expiration, because then the *new covenant* took place, St. Paul expressly tells us, *Eph. ii. 15.* *having abolished or voided in his flesh the law of commandments contained in ordinances*; and this, *v. 16.* he is said to have done *by his cross*; and more plainly, *Col. ii. 14.* *blotting out the hand-writing of ordinances which was against us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.*

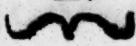
So that ye see that even the *cerimonial* law was not so properly *abrogated* by the sacrifice and death of Christ, but rather had its *accomplishment*, and attain'd its end, in the sacrifice of Christ, which by the eternal

SERM. nal efficacy of it to the expiation of sin, and the purifying of our consciences, hath made all the sacrifices and washings, and other rights of the *ceremonial law*, for ever needless and superfluous.

L.


Thirdly, But especially as to the *moral law*, and those precepts which are of *natural* and *perpetual* obligation, our Saviour did not come either to *dissolve*, or to *lessen* and *slacken* the obligation of them.

And of this I told you our Saviour doth principally, if not solely speak here in the text, as will appear to any one that shall attentively consider the scope of this discourse. In the beginning of his sermon he promiseth blessing to those, and those only, who were endow'd with those virtues which are required by the precepts of the *moral law*, or comprehended in them; and then he tells them, that Christians must be very eminent and conspicuous for the practice of them, v. 16. *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven*; and then he cautions them not to entertain any such imaginations, as if he intended to dissolve the obligation of the law, and to free men from the practice of *moral* duties, which probably some might have suggested against him; *think not that I am come to destroy the Law and the Prophets*; as if he had said, you cannot entertain any such conceit, if you consider that the precepts of which I inculcate upon you, and those virtues, the practice whereof I recommend to you, are the same which are contain'd in *the Law and the Prophets*. So that I am so far from crossing the main design of *the Law and the prophets*, and taking away the obligation of *moral* duties enjoyn'd by the Jewish religion, that I come purposely to carry on the same design to *further perfection*, to give a *more perfect and clear law*, and to give a *greater enforcement and encouragement* to the practice of *moral* duties; these were always the sum and substance of religion, the ultimate design of *the Law and the Prophets*, and therefore I am

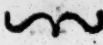
so far from discharging men from the obligation of SERM.
the *moral* precepts of the *law*, that I come to bind L.
them more strongly upon you. And verily I say unto 
you, that is, I solemnly declare, that whosoever shall
break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men
so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven ;
that is, he shall in no wise enter therein. You think
the Scribes and Pharisees very pious and excellent
men, and to have attained to a high pitch of righte-
ousness ; but I say unto you, that except your righteous-
ness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pha-
risees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of hea-
ven. And then he instanceth in several precepts of
the *moral law*, which in the letter of them, especially
as they were interpreted by the teachers of the
law among the Jews, were very much short of that
righteousness and perfection which he now requires
of his Disciples and Followers. So that his whole
discourse is about precepts and obligations of the *mo-*
ral law, and not a word concerning the *ritual* and
ceremonial law ; which makes me very prone to think,
that our Saviour's meaning in the text is this, that
his religion was so far from thwarting and opposing
that which was the main design of the *Law and the*
Prophets, that is, of the *Jewish religion*, that the
principle intention of Christianity was to advance the
practice of goodness and virtue, by strengthening the
obligation of *moral* duties, and giving us a more per-
fect law and rule of life, and offering better argu-
ments and greater encouragements to the obedience
of this law. Therefore for the fuller explication and
illustration of this matter, I shall endeavour to clear
these *three* points.

First, That the main and ultimate design of the
law and the Prophets, was to engage men to the
practice of *moral* duties, that is, of real and substan-
tial goodness.

SERM. *Secondly*, That the law of *Moses*, or the dispensation of the Jewish religion, was comparatively very weak and insufficient to this purpose.

Thirdly, That the Christian religion hath supplied all the defects, and weakneses and imperfections of that dispensation. These three particulars will fully clear our Saviour's meaning in this text

First, that the main and ultimate design of the *Law and the Prophets*, was to engage men to the practice of *moral duties*; that is, of real and substantial goodness, consisting in those virtues which our Saviour mentions at the beginning of this Sermon; *humility*, and *meekness*, and *mercy*, and *righteousness*, and *purity*, and *peaceableness*. This our Saviour more than once tells us was the sum and substance, the main scope and design of the whole doctrine of the *law and the Prophets*, Matt. vii. 12. *Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.* And Matt. xxii. 40. That the love of God and our neighbour, those two great commands to which all moral duties are reduced, are the two great hinges of the Jewish religion; *on these two hang all the Law and the Prophets.* St. Paul calls love, the fulfilling of the whole law, Rom. xiii. 10. St. James, the perfect and the royal law, as that which hath a sovereign influence upon all parts of religion. And therefore the Apostle, Rom. iii. 21. tells us that this more perfect righteousness which was brought in by the Gospel, or the Christian religion, is witnessed by the *Law and the Prophets*. And indeed the Prophets every where do slight and undervalue the ritual and ceremonial part of religion, in comparison of the practice of moral duties, Isa. i. 11. *To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? bring no more vain oblations; your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth.* But what then are the things that are acceptable to God? He tells us at the 16th ver. *Wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings* from

from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well; SERM.
seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, L.
plead for the widow. And by the Prophet Jeremiah 

God tells that people, that the business of sacrifices was not the thing primarily design'd by God, but obedience to the moral law; the ritual law came in upon occasion, for the prevention of Idolatry, and by way of condescension to the temper of that people; and thus Maimonides and the learned Jews understand these words, Jer. vii. 22, 23. *I speak not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt-offerings and sacrifices; but this thing commanded I them, saying, obey my voice, and walk in all the ways that I have commanded, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people.* So likewise in the Prophet Hosea, God plainly prefers the moral before the ritual part of religion, as that which was principally designed and intended by him, Hos. vi. 6. *I desired mercy and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings; but most plainly and expressly, Mic. vi. 6. Wherewith shall I come before the Lord? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, and ten thousand of rivers of oyl? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?* These it seems were the great things which God stood upon and required of men even under that imperfect dispensation; and these are the very things which the christian religion doth so strictly enjoyn and command; so that *this righteousness* which the Gospel requires, *was witnessed to by the law and the Prophets.* I proceed to the

Second point, That the law of Moses, or the dispensation of the Jewish religion, was comparatively very weak, and insufficient to make men truly good, and for the promoting of real and inward righteousness;

SERM. nels; it gave laws indeed to this purpose, but those
 L. not so clear and perfect, or at least not so clearly un-
 W derstood as they are now under the Gospel; and it
 made no express promises of inward grace, and as-
 sistance, to quicken and strengthen us in the doing
 of our duty; it made no explicit promises of any
 blessing and reward to the doing of our duty be-
 yond this life; so that the best and most powerful
 arguments and encouragements to obedience, were
 either wholly wanting, or very obscurely revealed
 under this dispensation.

And this insufficiency of the *Jewish* dispensation, both to our justification and sanctification, to the reconciling of us to God, and the making of us really good, the Apostle frequently inculcates in the new Testament; St. Paul Acts xiii. 38, 39. *Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified, from all those things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses; and Rom. viii. 3. What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh; that is, by reason of the carnality of that dispensation, consisting in the purification of the body, Gal. iii. 21. he calls it a law unfit to give life; If there had been a law which could have given life, verily righteousness had been by the law. And the Apostle to the Hebrews, Ch. viii. 6, 7, 8, &c. finds fault with the dispensation of the law, for the lowness and meaness of its promises, being only of temporal good things; and for want of conferring an inward and a powerful principle to enable men to obedience; but now hath he obtained (speaking of Christ) a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises; for if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for a second; and this second and better covenant, he tells us, was foretold by the prophets of the old Testament; for finding fault with them, he saith, be-
 hold*

bold the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a SERM.
new covenant with the house of Israel, and the house of L.
Judah; not according to the covenant which I made
with their fathers. For this is the covenant which I
will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith
the Lord, I will put my laws into their minds, and
write them in their hearts. And chap. x. 1, 4. he
shews the inefficacy of their sacrifices for the real ex-
piation of sin, the law having but a shadow of good
things to come, and not the lively representation of the
things themselves, can never with those sacrifices which
they offer'd year by year continually, make the comers
thereunto perfect; for it is not possible that the blood of
bulls and goats should take away sins.

I should now have proceeded to the *third* particu-
lar; namely, that the christian religion hath suppli-
ed all the defects and weakness and imperfection of
the Jewish dispensation; but that I shall not now
enter upon, but make one plain inference from the
substance of what I have already discoursed upon
this argument.

If our Saviour came not to dissolve and loosen the
obligation of moral duties, but to confirm and establish
it, and to enforce and bind the practice of these duties
more strongly upon us, then they do widely and wilfully
mistake the design of Christianity, who teach that
it dischargeth men from the obligation of the moral law,
which is the fundamental and avow'd principle of
the *Antinomian* doctrine, but directly contrary to
this declaration of our Saviour in the text, *that he*
came not to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but to
perfect and fulfil them; (for to take away the obli-
gation of a law, is plainly to destroy and make it void;) and
contrary to the Apostle's solemn resolution of
this matter, *Rom. iii. 31. Do we then make void the*
law through faith? that is, does the Gospel destroy
and take away the obligation of the law? *God for-*
bid, yea we establish the law; the christian religion is

SERM. so far from designing or doing any such thing, that
 L. it gives new strength and force to it.

But surely they that teach this doctrine, did never duly consider that terrible threatening of our Saviour, after the text, which seems to be so directly levell'd at them; *Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be call'd the least in the kingdom of heaven*; for how can men more effectually teach the violation, not only of the least, but of the greatest of God's commandments, than by declaring that *the Gospel hath set men free from the obligation of the moral law*? which is in effect to say, that Christians may act contrary to all the duties of morality, that is, do the most impious things in the world, without any offence against God, and notwithstanding this, continue to be his children, and highly in the favour of God.

And all the security they have against this impious consequence, is that weak and slender pretence, “that gratitude and love to God will preserve them
 “from making this ill use of the grace of the Gospel, and oblige them to abstain from sin, and to
 “endeavour to please God as much as any law could
 “do.” But then they do not consider the nonsense of this; for there can be no such thing as *sin*, if the obligation of the law be taken away, for *where there is no law, there can be no transgression*, as the Apostle and common reason likewise tells us; so that the law being remov'd and taken away, all actions become indifferent, and one thing is not more a *sin*, or offence against God than another. And what then is it they mean that gratitude will oblige men to, or preserve them from? when there can be no such thing as *sin* or *duty*, as *pleasing* or *offending* God, if there be no *law* to oblige us to the one, or restrain us from the other.

And what is, if *this* be not, to turn the grace of God into wantonness, and to make christian liberty a cloak for all sorts of sins? A man cannot do a greater

ter despite to the christian religion, nor take a more **SERM.**
 effectual course to bring it into contempt, and to **L.**
 make it to be his'd out of the world, than to repre-
 sent it as a lewd and licentious doctrine, which gives
 men a perfect discharge from all the duties of *mora-*
lity, and obligeth them only to *believe confidently, that*
Christ hath purchased for them a liberty to do what they
will, and that upon these terms, and no other, they are
secured of the favour of God in this world, and eternal
salvation in the other. This is the sum and the plain
 result of the *Antinomian* doctrine, the most pernici-
 ous *heresy*, and most directly destructive of the great
 end and design of Christianity, that ever yet was
 broached in the world. But ye have not so learned
 Christ, if so be ye have heard him, and have been taught
 by him, as the truth is in Jesus, that ye put off concerning
 your former conversation, the old man, which is cor-
 rupt according to the deceitful lusts, and that ye be re-
 newed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new
 man, which after God is created in righteousness, and
 true holiness.

The Second
Sermon on
this Text.

S E R M O N L I.

Christianity doth not destroy, but perfect the Law of Moses.

× MATTH. v. 17.

Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

SERM.
LI.

I Have consider'd this saying of our Saviour^s with respect to *the moral law*, and those precepts which are of *natural* and *perpetual* force, and that our Saviour did not come hither to *dissolve* or *loosen* the obligation of them; for the illustration of which, I propounded to clear these *three* points.

First, That the main and ultimate design of *the Law and the Prophets*, was to engage men to the practice of *moral* duties, that is, of real and substantial goodness.

Secondly, That *the law of Moses*, or the dispensation of the Jewish religion, was comparatively very weak, and insufficient to make men truly good, and ineffectual to promote inward and real righteousness. These *two* points I have spoken to. I shall now proceed to the

Third, namely, That the christian religion doth supply all the defects and weaknesses and imperfections of the Jewish dispensation.

The Jewish religion had very considerable advantages above the meer *light of nature*, which was all that the heathen world had to conduct them towards eternal happiness; the *Jews* had the knowledge of the one true God, and very signal and particular testimonies

testimonies of the divine providence, which did naturally tend to beget in them good hopes of a future life, and the rewards of another world; they had the natural law reveal'd, and the main precepts of it written with God's own hand, and by *Moses* deliver'd to them; by which means they had a more certain and distinct knowledge of their duty; they had Prophets frequently sent to them, to admonish them of their duty, and to exhort them to repentance, and to warn them of approaching judgments. They had good encouragement given to hope for the pardon of sin, by God's appointment of several ways of expiation; which how unlikely soever they were to be available to the effectual expiation of sin, yet they did signify that the divine nature was placable, and did seem to figure some more effectual way, design'd by God for that purpose, that should be exhibited in due time. And finally they had most express promises and threatenings of temporal blessings and judgments, to encourage them in their obedience, and to deter them from the transgression of God's laws. These advantages the *Jews* plainly had above the rest of the world, *God did not deal so with other nations, neither had the heathen such a knowledge of God's laws.*

But notwithstanding this, the Jewish religion was very short and defective, very weak and ineffectual to the great end of righteousness and true holiness, and to raise men to that perfection of goodness, of which human nature, through the grace of God, is capable; and therefore there wanted a more perfect institution, to supply the defects and weakness and imperfection even of that divine revelation which God had made to the *Jews*, and really to effect and accomplish that which the Jewish religion attempted and aimed at, and was but, as I may say, rudely begun under that imperfect institution. And this the Gospel, or the christian religion revealed by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ hath fully effected,

as

SERM.

LI.

SERM. as will evidently appear by a particular survey and
 LI. consideration of the main defects of the Jewish religion, which I shall shew to be all perfectly made up by the revelation of the Gospel, and the doctrine of Christianity, in these following particulars.

First, It was a great defect of the Jewish religion, that a considerable part of it was merely *external*, concerning the purification of *the body* and *the flesh*, and only figurative of that *inward* purity and *real* righteousness, which renders men truly good, and like to God; for which reason the Jewish institution is by the Apostle to the *Hebrews* call'd *the law of a carnal commandment*, Heb. vii. 16. and *Chap.* ix. 10. is said to *consist only* (that is chiefly) *in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances imposed on them until the time of reformation*; that is, till the *Messias* should come, and give such laws as should really tend to reform the hearts and lives of men; and therefore these laws and ordinances are call'd *poor pitiful elements, and the rudiments of the world*, fitted rather for *children* in understanding and goodness, than to bring *men* to any maturity and perfection in goodness. All their rites of purification did *only sanctify to the purifying of the flesh*; but *did not purge the conscience from dead works*, as the Apostle to the *Hebrews* speaks, *Chap.* ix. 13, 14. *they could not make those that performed and observed them perfect, as pertaining to the conscience*, v. 9. that is, these laws had no effect upon the minds of men, to make them really better, to cure them of their *moral* defects and impurities, their sins and vices.

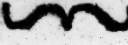
But the christian institution doth perfectly supply this defect, by taking us off from those *carnal* and *external* observances, and principally requiring that we *worship God in spirit and in truth*; by giving us such laws as wholly tend to advance *real* and *substantial* goodness, purity and holiness of heart and life, such as mainly tend to reform the minds and manners
 of

of men, and to make us like to that holy and perfect **SERM.**
 Being whom we worship: and besides an external, **LI.**
 humble and reverent demeanour of ourselves in the
 worship of God, (to which natural religion doth
 likewise direct;) Christianity hath only instituted
two solemn external rites, viz. Baptism, and the
Lord's supper; whereby we solemnly oblige ourselves
 to the practice of all virtue and goodness, I say *only*
these two, that by the multitude of *external* obser-
 vances, Christians might not be taken off from the
 minding of the *real* and *substantial* duties of religion.

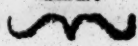
And therefore the church of *Rome* hath extreme-
 ly abated and weaken'd the force of Christianity up-
 on the hearts and lives of men, by amusing them
 with *external rites*, which they have multiplied to
 that excessive degree, as to make the yoke of Christ
 really *heavier* than that of *Moses*, and the christian
 religion a more *external* and *carnal commandment*
 than that of the law, and by this means have divert-
 ed and taken off the minds of men from the main
 design of Christianity, insomuch that they are so em-
 ploy'd and taken up with matters of *external ceremony*,
 that they have no leisure to think of being *good men*,
 and to mind the *great* and *substantial* duties and vir-
 tues of the christian life; so that they have spoil'd
 the christian religion of one of its chief excellencies
 and perfections, I mean the *simplicity of its worship*,
 which they have now incumber'd with so many fool-
 ish and frivolous *rites* and *observances*, as do not only
 render it more burthensome, but less apt to make
 men *inwardly* and *substantially* good, than even *Ju-
 daism* itself. This is so true and so visible, that the
 wiser and better sort of them have complain'd of it
 for several ages, and still do, as much as they dare
 for fear of the *inquisition*, or some other censure.

Secondly, Another defect of the law of *Moses* was,
 that it did not give encouragement enough to repen-
 tance, by declaring and assuring to us any certain
 way and method for the expiation and forgiveness of
 sin.

SERM. fin. This the rites of all religions aimed at, and pretended to; but were very ineffectual to that end.

LI.  The heathen sacrifices, and all the cruel and barbarous rites belonging to them, did all pretend to be so many ways of appeasing the offended deity, and of making atonement and expiation for sin; and the sacrifices of the *Jews* were instituted by God himself, to make an *external* and *legal* expiation, and to be types and shadows of a *better* and *more perfect* sacrifice, which should really expiate sin; but even this was very darkly and imperfectly discovered to them; besides, that the expiations of the law did only extend to the least sorts of sins, those of *ignorance* and *inadvertency*, but not at all to *presumptuous* sins, and such as were committed with a *high hand*, nor to *wilful* and *deliberate* sins, except in some very few and rare cases particularly mentioned in the law; so that tho' a great part of the religious rites both of the Pagan and Jewish religion, aimed at the expiation of sin, yet were they really ineffectual to that end; and upon the whole matter, mankind, tho' they conceived good hope of God's mercy and forgiveness in case of repentance, (*Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his anger?*) yet they were unacquainted with any certain and effectual means to that purpose.

It remains then, that this great blessing of the forgiveness of sins, was never sufficiently declared and assured to mankind, but through Jesus Christ in the Gospel. So St. Paul expressly asserts, *Acts* xiii. 38, 39. *Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins, and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.* The Gospel hath provided an expiation for all sins in general, and that by a sacrifice of inestimable value, *the blood of the Son of God.* And this is a mighty encouragement to repentance, and one most effectual means to reclaim men from
their

their sins, to be assured that they are indemnified for SERM.
 what is past. And this the Apostle means when he LI.
 says, *Gal. iii. 13. that Christ hath redeemed us from the* 
curse of the law, being made a curse for us; that is,
 whereas the law left sinners, as to those sins which
 stood most in need of Pardon, under a curse, having
 provided no expiation for them, Christ hath redeemed
 them from *that curse*, by making a general expia-
 tion for sin; and in this sense it is that the author to
 the *Hebrews* says, *chap. ix. 15. that Christ died for*
the redemption of the transgressions that were under the
first covenant; that is, for those sins for which the
 covenant of the law had provided no way of forgive-
 ness; and therefore St. *John* says emphatically, *1 John*
i. 7. that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all
sin.

Thirdly, The law did not afford sufficiently plain
 and certain rules and directions for a good life. As
 the corruption and degeneracy of mankind grew
 worse, so the light of nature waxed dimmer and
 dimmer, and the rule of good and evil was more
 doubtful and uncertain, and that in very considera-
 ble instances of our duty. The law of *Moses* was pe-
 culiar to the *Jews*: and even to them, who only had
 the benefit and advantage of it, it did not give clear
 and perfect light and direction as to *moral* duties,
 and those things which are of an *eternal* and *immuta-*
ble reason and goodness. And therefore our Saviour
 in this sermon explains it to a greater perfection than
 it was understood to have among the *Jews*, or the
 letter of it seemed to intend, and hath not only for-
 bidden several things permitted by that law, as *di-*
vorice and *retaliation of injuries*; but hath heightened
 our duty in several instances of it, requiring us to *love*
our enemies, and to *forgive the greatest injuries and*
provocations, tho' never so often repeated, and not only
not to revenge them, but to requite them with good turns;
 which were not understood by mankind to be laws
 before, but yet when duly consider'd, are very agree-
 able

SERM. able to right reason, and the sense of the wisest and
 LI. best men. So that the christian religion hath not
 only fixt and determin'd our duty, and brought it
 to a *greater certainty*, but hath rais'd it to a *greater perfection*, and rendered it every way fit to bring the
 minds of men to a more divine temper, and a more
 reasonable and perfect way of serving God, than
 ever the world was instructed in before.

Fourthly, The promises and threatnings of the
 law were only of *temporal* good and evil things,
 which are, in comparison of the *endless* rewards and
 punishments of *another world*, but very languid and
 faint motives to obedience. Not but that the *Jews* un-
 der the law had such apprehensions of their own im-
 mortality, and of a future state of happiness and
 misery after this life, as natural light suggested to
 them; which was in most but a wavering and uncer-
 tain persuasion, and consequently of small efficacy to
 engage men to their duty; but the law of *Moses* ad-
 ded little or nothing to the clearness of those natural
 notions concerning a future state, and the strengthen-
 ing of this persuasion in the minds of men; it did ra-
 ther suppose it, than give any new force and life to it.
 And for this reason more particularly the Apostle
 tells us that *the law was but weak* to make men
 good; because it did not work strongly enough up-
 on the hopes and fears of men by the weight of its
 promises, and the terror of its threatnings; and
 that for this *weakness* and *imperfection* of it, it was
removed, and a more *powerful* and *awakening* dispen-
 sation brought in the place of it; *Heb. vii. 18, 19.*
For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment
that was before (that is, of the Jewish law) *for the*
weakness and unprofitableness thereof; for the law made
nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did;
that is, the covenant of the Gospel, which promiseth
eternal life. And chap. viii. 6. for this reason more
especially the Apostle says, that Christ had obtained a
more excellent ministry, being the Mediator of a better
covenant,

covenant, which was establish'd upon better promises. **SERM.**
 And Rom. i. 16, 18. St. Paul tells us, that for this **LI.**
 reason the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation, because therein the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men. The clear revelation of a future judgment, was that which made the Gospel so proper and so powerful an instrument for the salvation of men. The great impiety of mankind, and their impenitency in it, was not so much to be wonder'd at before, while the world was in a great measure ignorant of the infinite danger of a wicked life; and therefore God is said in some sort to overlook it; but now he commands all men every where to repent, because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead, Acts xvii. 30, 31. The clear discovery and perfect assurance of a future judgment, calls loudly upon all men to leave their sins, and turn to God.

Fifthly, The covenant of the law had no spiritual promises contained in it, of the grace and assistance of God's holy Spirit, for the mortifying of sin, and enabling men to their duty, and supporting them under sufferings: but the Gospel is full of clear and express promises to this purpose. Our Saviour hath assured us, that God will give his holy Spirit to them that ask him, Luke xi. 13. and this the Apostle tells us is actually conferr'd upon all true Christians, those who do sincerely embrace and believe the Gospel, Rom. viii. 9. *If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.* Hence the Gospel is call'd by the same Apostle, *the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus*, ver. 2. of that chap. *The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death*; and in the next words he tells us, that herein manifestly appeared the weakness of the law, that it left men destitute of this mighty help and advantage (at least to any special promise of it) *What*
the

SERM. *the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and by making him a sacrifice for sin condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; that is, that that righteousness which the law aimed at, and signified, but was too weak to effect, might be really accomplished in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; that is, who are acted and assisted by a higher and better principle than men either have in nature, or the carnal dispensation of the law did endow men withal. And because of this great defect, the law is said to be a state of bondage and servitude; and on the contrary, the Gospel, by reason of this mighty advantage, is call'd a state of adoption and liberty, ver. 15. for ye have not received the Spirit of bondage, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba Father; and 2 Cor. iii. 17. where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. And to this very thing St. Paul appeals, as that whereby men might judge whether the law or the Gospel were the more excellent and powerful dispensation, Gal. iii. 2. This only would I learn of you, received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? As if he had said, let this one thing determine that whole matter; were ye made partakers of this great privilege and blessing of the Spirit, while ye were of the Jewish religion, or since ye became Christians? And, ver. 14. he calls it the blessing of Abraham; that is, the blessing promised to all nations by Abraham's seed, namely, the Messiah; that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.*

And then, for the supporting us under afflictions, the Gospel promiseth an extraordinary assistance of God's holy Spirit to us, 1 Pet. iv. 14. *If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye, for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you.*

But

But were there no good men under the dispensation SERM. of the law? Yes certainly there were, and they were LI. so by the grace and assistance of God's holy Spirit: but then this was an effect of the divine goodness; but not of any *special promise*, contained in that covenant, of divine grace and assistance to be conferred on all those that were admitted into it. But thus it is in the new covenant of the Gospel; and therefore the law is call'd *a dead letter, the oldness of the letter, and the ministration of the letter*; in opposition to the Gospel, which is call'd the *ministration of the Spirit*. And this the Apostle lays special weight upon, as a main difference between these *two covenants*, that the first gave an *external law*, but the new covenant offers *inward grace and assistance* to enable men to obedience, and hath an *inward and powerful efficacy* upon the minds of men, accompanying the ministration of it, *Heb. viii. 7, 8, 9, 10.* For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them he saith, Behold the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers, &c. For this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts.

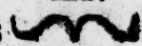
And of this *inward grace and assistance* we are further secured, by the powerful and prevalent and perpetual intercession of our High Priest for sinners at the right hand of God; not like the intercession of the priests under the law, who being sinners themselves, were less fit to interceed for others; but we have an High Priest that is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, who by the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, to purchase for us those blessings which he interceeds for. The priests under the law were intercessors upon earth; but Christ is enter'd into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence

SERM. *sence of God for us, Heb. ix. 24.* The priests under the law were removed from this office by death; but

LI. *Christ, because he continues for ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood, and is an everlasting advocate and intercessor for us, in the virtue of his most meritorious sacrifice continually presented to his father, where he is always at the right hand of God, to present our prayers to him, and to obtain pardon of our sins, and grace to help in time of need, and by his intercession in heaven, to procure all those blessings to be actually conferr'd upon us, which he purchased for us by his blood upon earth; wherefore he is able to save to the utmost all those that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them, as the same Apostle speaks, Heb. vii. 25.*

And thus I have, as briefly as well I could, shewed how the christian religion doth supply all the weaknesses and imperfections of the Jewish religion, and consequently, does in no wise contradict or interfere with the great design of the Law and the Prophets, but hath perfected and made up whatever was weak or wanting in that institution, to make men truly good, or, as the expression is in the Prophet Daniel, *to bring in everlasting righteousness*; that is, to clear and confirm those laws of holiness and righteousness, which are of indispensable and eternal obligation.

And if this be the great design of our Saviour's coming, and the christian doctrine be every way fitted to advance righteousness and true holiness, and to make us as excellently good as this imperfect state of mortality will admit, since it hath many advantages incomparably beyond any religion or institution that ever was in the world, both in respect of the perfection of its laws, and the force of its motives and arguments to repentance, and a holy life, and in respect of the encouragements which it gives, and the examples which it sets before us, and the powerful assistance

assistance which it offers to us, to enable us to cleanse SERM.
ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and Spirit, and to LI.
perfect holiness in the fear of God; what a shame is this 
to us, who are under the power of this excellent institution, if the temper of our minds, and the tenor of our conversation be not in some measure answerable to the Gospel of Christ! The greater helps and advantages we have of being good, the greater things may justly be expected from us; for to whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required.

Christianity is the fulfilling of the righteousness of the law, by walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, by mortifying the deeds of the flesh, and by bringing forth the fruits of the Spirit, which are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness and temperance. The righteousness of faith doth not consist in a barren and ineffectual belief of the Gospel, in a mere embracing of the promises of it, and relying upon Christ for salvation; in a faith without works, which is dead, but in a faith which worketh by love, in becoming new creatures, and in keeping the commandments of God. The righteousness of faith speaking on this wise. This is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment, 1 John iii. 23. and, this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his brother also, 1 John iv. 21. That we approve the things that are excellent, being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the Glory and praise of God, Phil. i. 10, 11. Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, mind these things, Chap. iv. 8.

And then considering what abundant provision the Gospel hath made for our attainment of everlasting salvation, we are altogether without excuse, if we

SERM. *perish.* Since God *hath raised up so mighty a salvari-*

LI. *on for us; how shall we escape?* If we *die in our sins*, it is not because God would not forgive them, but because we would not repent and be saved; the fault is all our own, and we owe it wholly to our selves, if we be lost and undone for ever. If when *life and death*, heaven and hell, are so plainly *set before us*, eternal misery and perdition fall to our lot and portion, it is not because we were not warned of our danger, or because happiness and *the things of our peace were hid from our eyes*, but because we have made death and destruction our obstinate and final choice.

But, beloved, I hope better things of you, and things which accompany salvation, tho' I thus speak. Only let your conversation be as becometh the Gospel of Christ; and if we be careful to perform the conditions which the Gospel requires on our part, we shall not fail to be made partakers of that eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, hath promised to us, for his mercy's sake in Jesus Christ.

S E R M O N LII. The first Sermon on this Text.

Of the Nature of Regeneration, and
its Necessity, in order to Justification
and Salvation.

G A L A T. vi. 15.

*For in Christ Jesus, neither Circumcision availeth
any thing, nor Uncircumcision; but a new
Creature.*

THERE are two Epistles of St. Paul, namely, that to the *Romans*, and this to the *Galatians*, which are principally and particularly designed to confute a false persuasion, which had prevailed amongst many Christians, especially those who were converted from Judaism; that it was not enough for men to embrace and confess the christian religion, unless they kept the law of Moses, or at least submitted to that great precept, of circumcision; the neglect whereof among all the affirmative precepts of the law, was only threatn'd with excision, or being cut off from among the people. And of the prevalency of this error, and the great disturbance which it made in the christian church, we have a particular account, *Acts xv.* where a general council of the Apostles is call'd, and a letter written in their names to all the christian churches, to rectify their apprehensions in this matter, *ver. 24.* of that chap. For as much as we have heard, that certain which went out from us, have troubled you with words subverting your souls, saying ye must be circumcised, and keep the law, to whom we gave no such commandment, &c.

310 *Of the Nature of Régeneration, and its Necessity,*

SERM. And upon this occasion likewise it was, that St.

LII. *Paul* wrote this epistle to the *Galatians*, as likewise that to the *Romans*; in the former of which, after he had at large contuted this error, (which he calls *the preaching of another Gospel, than what the Apostles had preached, and the Christians first received*) in the beginning of the 5th Chapter he exhorts them to assert the liberty, which Christ had purchas'd for them, from the obligation of the law of *Moses*, ver. 1, 2. *Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing*; not that hereby he condemneth circumcision, as a thing evil in it self; for God never instituted nor commanded any thing that was so; but he opposeth the opinion of the necessity of it to our justification and salvation, when the Gospel had so plainly taken away the obligation and use of it; and consequently to affirm still the necessity of it, was really to renounce Christianity. For if Judaism was still the way to salvation, Christianity was to no purpose; and if Christianity be now the way, then the obligation to the Jewish religion was ceased. To avoid the force of this reasoning, it was not enough for the false Apostles to say (as it seems they did) that Christians were not obliged universally to the whole law of *Moses*, but principally to the law of circumcision; because circumcision being the sign and badge of that covenant, whoever took that upon him, did thereby own his obligation to the whole law, ver. 3, 4. *For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law; Christ is become of no effect to you, whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace; that is, whoever of you expect and profess to be justified by the law of Moses, ye take away the necessity and use of the christian religion; and are fallen from grace; that is do in effect renounce the Gospel; for we through the spirit, wait for the hope of righteousness*

ousness by faith, ver. 5. we by the Spirit, in oppositi-
 on to circumcision, which was in the flesh, do expect
 to be justified by the belief of the Gospel. For in Je-
 sus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor
 uncircumcision, ver. 6. that is, now under the dis-
 pensation of the Gospel by Christ Jesus, it signifies
 nothing to a man's justification or salvation, whether
 he be circumcised, or not circumcised, whether he
 be a Jew or a Gentile. All that the Gospel requires
 as necessary to these purposes, is, that we perform
 the conditions of the Gospel, that so we may be ca-
 pable of being made partakers of the blessings of
 it.

Now as the great blessing and benefit of the Gos-
 pel is variously exprest, as by the forgiveness of our
 sins, by our acceptance with God, or (which compre-
 hends both) by our justification, sometimes by adopti-
 on, and our being made the sons and children of God,
 sometimes by redemption, and (which is the con-
 summation of all) by salvation and eternal life; I say,
 as the blessing and benefit of the Gospel is in scrip-
 ture exprest to us by these several terms, which do in
 effect all signify the same thing; so our duty, and
 the condition the Gospel requires on our part, is
 likewise as variously exprest; sometimes, and that
 very frequently, by the word *faith*, as being the
 great source and principle of all religious acts and
 performances; but then this *faith* must not be a bare
 assent and persuasion of the truth of the Gospel, but
 such an effectual belief, as expresseth it self in suita-
 ble acts of obedience and holiness, such as the Apo-
 stle here calls *πίστις δι' ἀγάπης ἐνεργουμένη*, a faith which worketh
 by love, a faith that is inspir'd and acted, or rather
 consummate and made perfect by charity, (for so the
 word doth often signify,) and then this phrase will
 be just of the same importance with that of St. James,
 chap. ii. 22. by works is faith made perfect. Some-
 times, and that also very frequently, the condition

312 *Of the Nature of Regeneration, and its Necessity,*

SERM. of the Gospel is exprest by words which signify the
 LII change of our state, as by *repentance, conversion, re-*
 generation, renovation, sanctification, the new crea-
 ture, and the new man, which expressions are all
 so well known, that I need not refer to particular
 texts; sometimes the condition of the Gospel is ex-
 prest by the visible and sensible effects of this in-
 ward change in our outward life and actions; as
 namely by *obedience and keeping the commandments of*
God. So *Heb. v. 9.* Christ is said to be *the author of*
eternal salvation to them that obey him; where *obedi-*
ence is plainly put for the whole condition of the
 Gospel, the performance whereof entitles us to e-
 ternal life and happiness.

Now that by these various expressions, one and
 the samething is certainly intended and meant, viz.
 the condition of the Gospel; that which is requir'd
 on our part, in order to our full and perfect justifi-
 cation and acceptance with God, is evident beyond
 all denial; by comparing the three different ways
 whereby St. Paul doth express the same proposition
 for sense and substance; in which he tells us, what
 it is that will avail to our justification under the Gos-
 pel, that is, according to the terms of the christi-
 an religion; that is neither here nor there, that it
 signifies nothing whether a man be circumcised or
 not, but that we be so qualified as the Gospel re-
 quires, that the conditions upon which the blessings
 of the Gospel are promised be found in us. And
 there are three texts wherein the same thing is plain-
 ly intended in three very different expressions, *Gal.*
v. 6. In Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any
thing, nor uncircumcision: but faith, which is consum-
mate, or made perfect by charity. *Gal. vi. 15. For in*
Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing,
nor uncircumcision: but a new creature. *1 Cor. vii.*
19. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is no-
thing: but the keeping of the commandments of God.
 It is evident, that in these three texts the Apostle
 designs

designs to say the same thing, and consequently that *faith which is made perfect by charity, and the new creature, and keeping of the commandments of God,* are the same in sense and substance, viz. the condition of our justification and acceptance with God under the covenant of the Gospel, or in the christian religion. SERM. LII.

I shall at present, by God's assistance, handle the second of these texts. *In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision: but a new creature.* And here the condition of the Gospel is exprest to us, by the change of our state, which in Scripture is call'd our *regeneration*, or becoming *new creatures*, and *new men*. Circumcision was but an outward sign and mark upon the body, and the flesh, though it did indeed prefigure and typify the inward circumcision of the heart, the giving of men *new hearts*, and *new spirits*, under the more perfect dispensation of the Gospel: but now in *Jesus Christ*, that is, in the christian religion, the presence or the want of this outward mark will avail nothing to our justification; but that which was signified by it, the renovation of our hearts and spirits, our becoming *new creatures*, is now the condition of our justification and acceptance with God.

The false Apostles indeed did lay great stress upon the business of circumcision, not so much out of zeal to the law of *Moses*, as to avoid persecution, ver. 12. *They constrain you to be circumcised, only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.* For at that time, though the Christians were persecuted, yet the *Jews* by the *Roman* edicts had the free exercise of their religion, and therefore they gloried in this external mark of circumcision, because it exempted them from suffering; but *St. Paul* gloried in his sufferings for Christ, and the marks of that upon his body, ver. 14. *God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ;*

314 *Of the Nature of Regeneration, and its Necessity,*

SERM. *Christ*; and ver. 17. *I bear in my body the marks of the*

LII. *Lord Jesus.* He tells them, what necessities soever they might pretend of circumcision, either for their justification, or salvation, the true ground of all was to save themselves from temporal sufferings; and that in the christian religion it signifieth nothing to recommend them to the favour of God, whether they were circumcised or not; nothing would be available to this purpose, but the renovation and change of their hearts and lives. *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but a new creature, ^{καινὴ κτίσις} a new creation,* to intimate the greatness of the change, which Christianity, thoroughly entertained, made in men.

Having thus cleared the occasion and meaning of these words, I come now to consider the particulars contained in them, namely, these *two* things.

First, That the Gospel had taken away the obligation of the law of *Moses.* *In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision.*

Secondly, That according to the terms of the christian religion, nothing will avail to our justification and acceptance with God, but the real renovation of our hearts and lives; *neither circumcision, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.*

1. That the Gospel hath taken away the obligation of the law of *Moses.* *In Christ Jesus,* that is, now under the dispensation of the Gospel, *neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision.* There was never any general obligation upon mankind to this rite of circumcision, but only upon the seed of *Abraham*; but yet upon the preaching of the Gospel, many of the Jewish Christians would have brought the Gentiles under this yolk; pretending that Christianity was but a superstructure upon the law of *Moses*, which together with the Gospel, was to be the religion of the whole world; and there was some colour for this, because our Sa-
viour

viour himself submitted to this rite, and was cir-
 cumcised; which the Apostle takes notice of in the
 ivth Chap. of this Epist. ver. 4. *When the fulness*
of time was come, God sent forth his Son made of a
Woman, made under the law, that is circumcised.
 And 'tis true indeed, that our blessed Saviour was
 circumcised, but not to signifie to us the perpetui-
 ty of circumcision, and the continuance of it un-
 der the christian religion, but for a quite different
 end; as a testimony of his obedience to that law,
 which tho' afterwards it was to expire, yet was to
 be obeyed whilst it was in force, by all that were
 born under it; he was *made under the law*, and it be-
 came him, who came to teach mankind obedience to
 the laws of God, *to fulfil all righteousness* himself.
 And therefore the Apostle in this epistle, where he
 takes notice of this, that Christ was *made under the*
law, gives this reason of it, that he might be the
 fitter to free those who were under it, from the
 servitude of it; he was *made under the law*, *that he*
might redeem them that were under the law; and that
 those who were in the condition of servants before,
 might be set at liberty, and *receive the adoption of*
sons.

But how did his being *made under the law*, quali-
 fy him *to redeem those who were under the law*? Thus,
 by submitting to it himself, he shewed that he owned
 the authority of it, and that he had no malice or
 enmity against it; or as he himself expresses it, *that*
he came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it. And be-
 ing *fulfill'd*, and having serv'd the time and end for
 which God intended it, it expir'd of it self; like a
 law which is not made for perpetuity, but limited
 to a certain period. And our blessed Saviour, who
 came with greater authority than *Moses*, and gave
 greater testimony of his divine authority, had suf-
 ficient power to declare the expiration of it; and
 by commissioning his disciples before and after his
 death to preach the Gospel to the whole world, he
 put

316 *Of the Nature of Regeneration, and its Necessity,*

SERM. put an end to that *particular law and dispensation,*

LII. which only concern'd the *Jewish nation*, by giving a *general law to all mankind.*

So that from the death of our Saviour and his ascension into Heaven, upon which followed the general publication of the Gospel, the law of *Moses* ceased, and according to our Saviour's express appointment, Profelytes were to be admitted into the christian church only by *baptism*, and not by *circumcision*. And if Circumcision, which was the sign of that covenant, was laid aside, then the whole obligation of that law and covenant which God had made with the Jews, was also ceased. It was once indeed the mark of God's chosen and peculiar people; but now that God hath revealed himself to the whole world by his Son, and offers salvation to all mankind, Gentiles as well as Jews, the *wall of separation is broken down*, and circumcision, which was the mark of distinction between Jews and Gentiles, is taken away; and therefore he is said to have *made peace by his cross, and to have blotted out and taken away the hand-writing of ordinances, nailing it to his cross*; that is, from the time of his death to have taken away the obligation of the law of *Moses*, tho' it was a good while after, before the Jews were wholly weaned from the veneration and use of it.

Nay, it was some time before the Apostles were clearly convinc'd, that the Gospel was to be preach'd to the Gentiles; this being one of those truths, which our Saviour promised after his departure, his Spirit should lead them into the perfect knowledge of; and then they were fully instructed, that the law of *Moses* was expir'd, and that it was no longer necessary to the salvation of men, that they should be circumcised, and keep that law. And tho' it was once enjoin'd by God himself to the Jews, and their obedience to it was necessary to their acceptance with God; yet now by Christ Jesus, God had

had offered salvation to men upon other terms; and whether they were circumcised, or not, was of no moment to their justification or salvation one way or other; but provided they perform'd the condition of this new covenant of the Gospel, they were all alike capable of the divine favour and acceptance.

But I proceed to that, which I mainly intend to prosecute from these words; and that is the

Second particular in the text, namely that according to the terms of the Gospel, and the christian religion, nothing will avail to our justification and acceptance with God, but the real renovation of our hearts and lives; *neither circumcision, nor uncircumcision: but a new creature.* For the full explication of this, I shall do these *three* things.

First, Shew, what is imply'd in this phrase of a *new creature.*

Secondly, That this is the great condition of our justification and acceptance with God, and that it is the same in substance with *faith perfected by charity*, and with *keeping the commandments of God.*

Thirdly, That it is very reasonable it should be so.

i. What is imply'd in this phrase of a *new creature.* It is plain at first sight, that it is a metaphorical expression of that great and thorough change which is made in men by the Gospel, or the christian religion. The Scripture sets forth to us this change by great variety of expressions, by *conversion* and *turning from our iniquities unto God*; by *repentance*, (which signifies a *change of our mind and resolution*, and is in Scripture call'd *repentance from dead works, and repentance unto life*;) by *regeneration*, or *being born again*; by *resurrection from the dead*, and *rising to newness of life*; by *sanctification*, and *being wash'd and cleans'd from all filthiness and impurity*, which three last metaphors are imply'd in *baptism*, which is call'd *regeneration*, Tit.

iii. 5. *According to his mercy he saved us by the washing*

318 *Of the Nature of Regeneration, and its Necessity,*

SERM. *ing of regeneration, and renewing of the holy Ghost,*
 LII. *and our being born again of water and the holy Ghost,*

John iii. 3. Except a man be born again, &c. and ver. 5. Except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God; and the purifying of our consciences, Heb. x. 22. Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water; and the answer of a good conscience towards God, 1 Pet. iii. 21. Baptism doth now save us; not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God; and finally our being baptiz'd into the death and resurrection of Christ, Rom. vi. 3, 4. Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.) And lastly this change is set forth to us by renovation, and our being made new creatures and new men, 2 Cor. v. 17. Therefore if any man be in Christ, that is, professeth himself a Christian, he is a new creature; old things are past away, behold all things are become new. And so likewise, Ephes. iv. 22, 23, 24. this great change is exprest by putting off concerning the former conversation, the old man which is corrupt according to the lusts of deceit, and being renewed in the spirit of our minds, and putting on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. The expression is very emphatical, renewed in the spirit of our minds, that is, in our very minds and spirits, to signify to us that it is a most inward and thorough change, reaching to the very centre of our souls and spirits. And Colos. iii. 9, 10, 11. it is represented much after the same manner, Seeing ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircum-

uncircumcision, Barbarian, Cythian, bond nor free, **SERM.**
 but Christ is all, and in all. Which is the same **LII.**
 with what the Apostle says here in the text, that
in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing,
nor uncircumcision: but a new creature; that is, these
 external marks and differences signify nothing:
 but this inward change, *the new creature, Christ*
formed in us, this in the Christian religion is all
 in all.

But that we may the more clearly understand the
 just importance of this metaphor of *a new creature,*
 or *a new creation,* I shall,

First, Consider what it doth certainly signifie, by
 comparing this metaphorical phrase with other
 plain texts of Scripture.

And *Secondly,* That it doth not import what
 some would extend it to, so as to found Doctrines
 of great consequence upon the single strength of
 of this and the like metaphors in Scripture, with-
 out any manner of countenance from plain texts.

First, I shall consider what this metaphor doth
 certainly import, so as to be undeniably evident from
 other more clear and full texts of Scripture, namely
 these *two* things.

1. The greatness of this change.

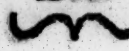
2. That it is effected and wrought by a divine
 power.

1. The greatness of this change; it is called
ναὐγενής, a new creation; as if the Christian doctrine,
 firmly entertained and believed, did as it were
 mould and fashion men over again, transforming
 them into a quite other sort of persons, than what
 they were before, and made such a change in them,
 as the creating power of God did, in bringing this
 beautiful and orderly frame of things out of their
 dark and rude *Chaos*. Thus the Apostle represents
 it, 2 Cor. iv. 6. *God who commanded the light to shine*
out of darkness, (alluding to the first creation) *bath*
shined into our hearts, to give the light of the know-
ledge

320 *Of the Nature of Regeneration, and its Necessity,*

SERM. *ledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

LII. We are translated from one extream to another.

 *Acts xxvi. 18. when our Lord sends Paul to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, he tells him what a change it would make in them, by opening their eyes, and turning them from darknes to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. And St. Peter expresses the change which christianity makes in men, by their being called out of darknes into a marvelous light, 1 Pet. ii. 9. And so St. Paul, Eph. v. 8. Ye were sometimes darknes, but now are ye light in the Lord.*

And indeed, where-ever the doctrine of Christ hath its full effect, and perfect work, it makes a mighty change both in their inward principles, and outward practice; it darts a new light into their minds, so that they see things otherwise than they did before, and form a different judgment of things from what they did before; it endues them with a new principle, and new resolutions, gives them another spirit and another temper, a quite different sense and gust of things from what they formerly had. And this inward change of their minds necessarily produceth a proportionable change in their lives and conversations, so that the man steers quite another course, acts after another rate, and drives on quite other designs from what he did before.

And this is remarkably seen in those who are reclaimed from impiety and prophaneness to religion, and from a vicious to a virtuous course of life. The change is great and real in all; but not so sensible and visible 'n some, as others; in those who are made good by the insensible steps of a pious and virtuous education; as in those who are translated out of a quite contrary state, and turn'd from the power of Satan unto God, and translated out of the kingdom of darknes, into the kingdom of Christ; which was the case of the heathen world, in their first conversion to christianity.

Secondly,

Secondly, This change is effected and wrought by a divine power, of the same kind with that, which created the world, and raised up Christ Jesus from the dead; two great and glorious instances of the divine power; and to these the Scripture frequently alludes, when it speaks of this *new creation*. *God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts. Like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also are raised to newness of life, saith St. Paul, Rom. vi. 4. And to the same purpose the same Apostle speaks, Ephes. i. 19, 20. And that ye may know what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the operation of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead. So that our renovation, and being made new creatures, is an instance of the same glorious power which exerted itself in the first creation of things, and in the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead; but not altogether after the same manner, as I shall shew under the next head.*

I should now in the *second* place proceed to shew, that this metaphor of a new creation doth not import what some men would extend it to, so as to found doctrines of great consequence upon the single strength of this and other like metaphors of Scripture, without any manner of countenance and confirmation from plain texts. But this I reserve to another discourse.

The Second
Sermon on
this Text.

S E R M O N LIII.

Of the Nature of Regeneration, and
its Necessity, in order to Justification
and Salvation.

GALAT. vi. 15.

*For in Christ Jesus, neither Circumcision availeth
any thing, nor Uncircumcision; but a new
Creature.*

SERM.
LIII.

IN these words are contained these *two* things.
First, That the Gospel hath taken away the
obligation of the law, having taken away the
sign of that covenant, which was *circum-*
cision.

Secondly, That according to the terms of the
Gospel, and the christian religion, nothing will a-
vail to our justification and acceptance with God,
but the real renovation of our hearts and lives.
For the full explication of this, I propounded to
do these *three* things.

I. To shew what is imply'd in this phrase of a
new creature.

II. That this is the great condition of our justi-
fication and acceptance with God, and that it is the
same in sense and substance with those other expres-
sions, in the two parallel texts, of *faith perfected*
by charity, and *keeping the commandments of God*.

III. That it is very reasonable that this should
be the condition of our justification, and accep-
tance to the favour of God.

I began with the *first* of these, *viz.* To shew
what is imply'd in this phrase of a *new creature*;
as to which I shew'd,

First,

First, What this metaphor doth certainly import, SERM. 2
so as to be undeniably evident from other more clear LIII.
and full texts of scripture ; namely, the greatness of
this change ; and that it is effected by a divine power. I now proceed,

Secondly, To shew that it doth not import what
some would extend it to, and that so as to found
doctrines of great consequence upon the meer and
single strength of this and other like metaphors of
scripture, without any manner of countenance and
confirmation from plain texts : such doctrines as these
three :

1. That as the creation was by an *irresistible* act of
the divine power, so is this *new creation*, or conver-
sion of a sinner.

2. That as creatures were *merely passive* in their be-
ing made, and contributed nothing at all to it, no
more do we to our conversion and regeneration.

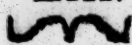
3. That as the creation of the several ranks and
kinds of creatures was *in an instant*, and effected by
the powerful word of God, only saying, *let such and
such things be*, and immediately they were ; so this
new creation, or the work of regeneration, is *in an
instant*, and admits of no degrees.

Concerning these *three* doctrines, of great moment
and consequence in divinity, I shall shew, with all
the clearness and brevity I can, that they are built
solely upon metaphors of scripture, tortur'd and
strain'd too far, without any real ground or founda-
tion from scripture or reason ; nay, contrary to the
tenor of the one and the dictates of the other ; nay
indeed contrary to the general experience of the o-
peration of God's grace upon the minds of men in
their conversion.

First, It is pretended, that as the creation was by
an *irresistible* act of the divine power, so is *the new
creation*, or the conversion of a sinner ; and this is
solely argued from the metaphorical expressions of
scripture concerning conversion ; such as being *cal-*

SERM.

LIII.



led out of darkness into light, alluding to that powerful word of God, which in the first creation commanded the light to shine out of darkness; being quicken'd, and rais'd to a new life; and from this metaphor here in the text, of a new creation.

But surely it is a dangerous thing in divinity to build doctrines upon metaphors, especially if we strain them to all the similitudes which a quick and lively imagination can find out; whereas one some obvious thing is commonly intended in the metaphor, and the meaning is absolv'd and acquitted in that, and it is folly to pursue it into all those similitudes which a good fancy may suggest. When our Saviour says, *that he will come as a thief in the night*, it is plain what he means; that the day of judgment will surprize the careless world, when they least look for it, that *he will come at an hour when they are not aware*; and tho' he resemble his coming to that of *a thief in the night*, yet here is nothing of robbery in the case. So here, when the change which Christianity makes in men is called a *new creation*, this only imports the greatness of the change, which by the power of God's grace is made upon the hearts and lives of men; and the metaphor is sufficiently absolv'd in this plain sense and meaning of it, agreeable to the literal expressions of scripture concerning this thing; and there is no need that this change should in all other respects answer the work of creation; and consequently there is no necessity that it should be effected in an *irresistible* manner, or that we should be *altogether passive* in this change, and that we should no ways concur to it by any act of our own, or that this work should be done *in an instant*, and admit of no steps and degrees.

It is not necessary that this change should be effected in an *irresistible* manner. God may do so, when he pleaseth, without any injury to his creatures; for it is certainly no wrong to any man to be made good and happy against his will; and I do not deny, but that

that God sometimes does so. The call of the disci-
 ples to follow Christ seems to have been a very sud-
 den and forcible impresson upon their minds, with-
 out any appearing reason for it; for it is not reason-
 able for any man to leave his calling, and follow e-
 very one that bids him do so. The conversion of
Saul from a persecutor of Christianity, to a zealous
 preacher of it, was certainly effected, if not in an *ir-*
resistible, yet in a very *forcible* and violent manner.
 The conversion of three thousand at one sermon,
 when the holy Ghost descended in a visible manner
 upon the Apostles, was certainly the effect of a
 mighty and *over-powering* degree of God's grace.
 And the like may be said of the sudden conversion
 of so many persons from heathenism, and great wick-
 edness and impiety of life, to the sincere profession of
 Christianity, by the preaching of the Apostles after-
 wards.

SERM.
 LIII.


But that this is not of absolute necessity, nor the
 ordinary method of God's grace, to work upon the
 minds of men in so *over-powering*, much less in an
irresistible manner, is as plain as any thing of that na-
 ture can be, both from experience, and the reason
 of the thing, and the constant tenor of the scripture.
 We find that many (perhaps the greatest part) of
 those that are good are made so by the insensible steps
 and degrees of a religious education, and having
 been never vicious, can give no great account of any
 sensible change, only that when they came to years
 of understanding, they consider'd things more, and
 the principles that were instill'd into them in their
 younger years did put forth themselves more vigo-
 rously at that time, as seeds sprout out of the ground,
 after they have a good while been buried and lain
 hid in the earth.

And it is contrary to reason, to make an *irresistible*
 act of divine power necessary to our repentance and
 conversion; because this necessarily involves in it
two things which seem very unreasonable.

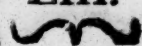
326 *Of the Nature of Regeneration, and its Necessity,*

SERM. *First*, That no man repents upon consideration
 LIH. and choice, but upon meer force and violent necessity, which quite takes away the virtue of repentance, whatever virtue there may be in the consequent acts of a regenerate state.

Secondly, it implies that the conversion and repentance of those upon whom God doth not work *irresistibly* is impossible, which is the utmost can be said to excuse the impenitency of men, by taking it off from their own choice, and laying it upon the impossibility of the thing, and an utter disability in them to choose and do otherwise.

And it is likewise contrary to the constant tenor of the Bible, which supposeth that men do very frequently resist the grace and holy spirit of God. It is said of the Pharisees by our Saviour, *Luke vii. 30.* that *they rejected the counsel of God against themselves*; that is, the merciful design of God for their salvation. And of the Jews, *Acts vii. 51.* that *they always resisted the holy Ghost*. So that some operations of God's grace and holy Spirit are *resistible*, and such as if men did not resist them, would be effectual to bring them to faith and repentance, else why are the Pharisees said to *reject the counsel of God against themselves*, that is, *to their own ruin*; implying, that if they had not rejected it, they might have been saved; and if they had, it had been without *irresistible* grace; for that which was offered to them, was actually *resisted* by them. Other texts plainly shew, that the reason of mens impenitency and unbelief is not any thing wanting on God's part, but on theirs; as those known texts, wherein our Saviour laments the case of *Jerusalem*, because they obstinately brought destruction upon themselves, *Luke xix. 42.* *If thou hadst known in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace*: intimating that they might have known them, so as to have prevented that desolation which was coming upon them, and was a forerunner of their eternal ruin; *but now they are hid from thine eyes*;

inti-

intimating that then God gave them up to their own **SERM.**
 blindness and obstinacy ; but the time was, when **LIII.**
 they might have *known the things of their peace* ; 
 which cannot be upon the supposition of the necessity
 of an *irresistible* act of God's grace to their conver-
 sion, and repentance ; because then without that they
 could not have repented, and if that had been afford-
 ed to them, they had infallibly repented. So like-
 wise in that other text, *Matth. xxiii. 37. Ob ! Je-*
rusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered
thee, even as an hen gathereth her chickens under her
wings, and you would not. And in *John v. 40. Ye*
will not come unto me that ye might have life. He
would have gathered them, and they would not ; he
would have given them life, but they would not come
to him. Are these serious and compassionate expof-
 tulations and declarations of our Saviour's gracious
 intention towards them, any ways consistent with
 an impossibility of their repentance ? which yet must
 be said, if *irresistible* grace be necessary thereto ; for
 then repentance is impossible without it, and that it
 was not afforded to them is plain, because they did
 not repent. The same may be said of that solemn
 declaration of God, *Ezek. xxxiii. 11. As I live,*
saieth the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of
the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and
live. Can it be said that God hath *no pleasure in the*
death of sinners, and yet be true, that he denies to
 the greatest part of them, that grace which is neces-
 sary to their repentance ? Upon this supposition how
 can it be true, that *if the mighty works that were*
done in Chorazin and Bethsaida, had been done in Tyre
and Sidon, they would have repented, *Mat. xi. 21.*
 since *irresistible* grace did not accompany those mi-
 racles ? for if it had, *Chorazin and Bethsaida had*
repented, and without it *Tyre and Sidon could not re-*
pent.

The same difficulty is in those texts, wherein God
 is represented as expecting the repentance and con-

328 *Of the Nature of Regeneration, and its Necessity,*

SERM. version of sinners; and our Saviour wondering at
 LIII. *their unbelief and hardness of heart, and upbraiding*
 ~~~~~ *them with it, Isa. v. 4. What could I have done more*  
*to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore*  
*when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought*  
*it forth wild grapes? Mark vi. 6. 'tis said our Saviour*  
*marvell'd at the unbelief of the Jews. And chap. xvi.*  
*14. that he upbraided his Disciples with their unbelief*  
*and hardness of heart. But why should the repen-*  
*tance of sinners be expected, or their unbelief mar-*  
*vell'd at, or indeed be upbraided to them, by him*  
*who knew it impossible to them, without an irre-*  
*sistible power and grace, which he knew likewise*  
*was not afforded to them? neither God nor man*  
*have reason to wonder that any man does not do*  
*that, which at the same time they certainly know*  
*he cannot do.*

The bottom of all that is said to avoid this pressing difficulty, is this, “ that this impotence and  
 “ dissability of sinners is their sin, and therefore  
 “ cannot be pleaded in their excuse, for their impo-  
 “ nitency; but God may still justly require that of  
 “ them, which they had once a natural power to  
 “ do, but wilfully forfeited and lost it; they had  
 “ this power in *Adam*, and forfeited it by his diso-  
 “ bedience.” To shew how slight this evasion is,  
 I need not run into that argument, how far we are  
 guilty of the sin of our first parents. That by that  
 first transgression and disobedience all mankind suf-  
 fers, and our natures are extremely corrupted and  
 depraved, cannot be denied; but the corruption of  
 our natures is a thing very different from personal  
 guilt, strictly and properly so call'd. I will take  
 the business much shorter, and granting that man-  
 kind had in *Adam* a natural power to have continu-  
 ed obedient to the laws of God, yet since by one man  
 sin enter'd into the world, and all are now sinners,  
 here is an obligation to *repentance*, as well as to obe-  
 dience, and men shall be condemned for their *impe-*  
*nitency.*

nitency. I ask now, whether in *Adam* we had a SERM.  
power to *repent*? 'Tis certain *Adam* had not this LIIL.  
power, and therefore I cannot see how we could  
lose it, and forfeit it in him. *Adam* indeed had a  
natural power *not to have sinned*, and so *not to have*  
*needed repentance*; but no Power to *repent* in the state  
of innocency, because in that state repentance was  
impossible, because there could be no occasion for  
it. He had it not after his fall, because by that he  
forfeited all his power to that which is spiritually  
good. 'Tis said indeed he had it in innocency, but  
forfeited it by his fall; so that he had it, when  
there was no occasion or possibility of the exercise  
of it, and lost it when there was occasion for it;  
or if he did not lose it by his fall, we have it still,  
and then there is no need of any supernatural, much  
less *irresistible* grace to *repentance*; so that our im-  
potency, as to the particular duty of *repentance*,  
cannot be charg'd upon us, as our fault, not so  
much as upon the account of original sin.

But the want of this power is the consequent and  
just punishment of our first transgression. Be it so;  
but if this impotency still remain in all those to  
whom God doth not afford his *irresistible* grace, how  
comes the grace offer'd in the gospel to aggravate  
the impenitency of men, and increase their condem-  
nation? For if it be no remedy against this impoten-  
cy, how comes it to inflame the guilt of impeniten-  
cy? Or how is it grace to offer mercy to those up-  
on their repentance, who are out of a possibility of  
repenting; and yet to punish them more severely for  
their impenitency after this offer made to them,  
which they cannot accept without that grace which  
God is resolved not to afford them? If this be the  
case, the greatest favour had been to have had no  
such offer made to them, and it had been happier  
for mankind, that *the grace of God had not ap-*  
*pear'd to all men*, but only to those who shall *irresis-*  
*tibly* be made partakers of the benefit of it.

Secondly,



330 *Of the Nature of Regeneration, and its Necessity,*

SERM. Secondly, Another doctrine groundd upon this  
 LIII. metaphor of *a new creation*, is, that we are *meerly*  
*passive* in the work of conversion and regeneration,  
 and contribute nothing to it; that God does all,  
 and we do nothing at all; and this follows from the  
 former, especially if we allow that metaphor as far  
 as it will carry us. For as the first creation of things  
 was by an *irresistible* act of divine power, so the  
 things that were made were only *passive* in their cre-  
 ation; and as they could make no resistance, so nei-  
 ther could they contribute any thing to their being  
 what they are. And this doctrine is not only argu-  
 ed from the metaphor of *a new creation*, but from  
 several other metaphors used in scripture to describe  
 our natural state; as namely, *darkness*, *blindness*,  
 and our being *dead in trespasses and sins*; from whence  
 it is inferr'd, that we contribute no more to our  
 renovation, than darkness doth to the introduction  
 of light, than a blind man can do to the recovery  
 of his sight, or a dead man to his own resurrection;  
 but are *wholly passive* in this work. And to counte-  
 nance this notion, they make great advantage of the  
 character which is given in scripture of the most  
 degenerate heathen, taking it for granted, that  
 their condition is the true standard of a natural and  
 unregenerate state; and to this purpose they insist  
 particularly upon that description of the gentile  
 idolaters, *Eph. iv. 18, 19. Having the understanding*  
*darken'd, being alienated from the life of God, through*  
*the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of*  
*their hearts; who being past feeling, have given them-*  
*selves over to lasciviousness; to work all uncleanness*  
*with greediness.* Which is indeed a description of  
 men in their natural state, but not of *all*, but of  
 such as by the worst sort of vicious practices of the  
 grossest idolatry, and most abominable lewdness,  
 were degenerated to the utmost, so that their con-  
 dition seem'd desperate, without a miraculous and  
 extraordinary grace of God, which was probably  
 afforded

afforded to many of these. In like manner they SERM. LIII.  
 argue the common condition of mankind, from the description which is given of the wickedness of men, before God brought the flood upon them.   
*Gen. vi. 5. God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.* This they make the character of *all men*, in their *natural* state, whereas this is a description of an *extraordinary* degeneracy of men, signifying that the world was then extremely bad, and depraved to the highest degree; for God gives this as a reason why he was resolv'd to drown the world, and to *destroy man from the face of the earth*, because *their wickedness was grown to so great an height*. But if this were a description of the natural state of mankind, this could be no particular reason for bringing a flood upon the world at that time, there being the same reason for it, for fifteen hundred years before, and ever will be the same reason to the end of the world, that is, that men are naturally corrupted and depraved. Surely they consider the Scripture very superficially, that interpret it at this rate.

'Tis too true, that the nature of man is sadly corrupted and depraved; but not so bad as by vicious practices and habits it may be made; all men are not equally at the same distance from the grace of God; some are *nearer to the kingdom of God* than others, and less force and violence will serve to *rescue them from the power of Satan*, and to *transplant them into the kingdom of Christ*. The *prevalency and dominion of sin* makes an *unregenerate* state, as the *prevalency of grace* puts a man into a *regenerate* state. An unregenerate man is not necessarily as bad as is possible, no more than it is necessary to a regenerate state, that a man be perfectly good; so that it is a great mistake to argue the common condition of all mankind, from the descriptions that are given in the scripture of the worst of men; and therefore  
 if

332 *Of the Nature of Regeneration, and its Necessity,*

SERM. if it were granted that *irresistible* grace were necessary for the conversion of *such*, it will not follow that the same is necessary to *all*.

All unregenerate men are not equally devoid of a sense of God, and spiritual things; they have many convictions of what they ought to be and do, and under those convictions are very capable of persuasion, which dead men are not. The grace of God is necessary to the conversion of a sinner, but it is not necessary that he should be *only passive* in this work. Experience tells us the contrary, that we can do something, that we can co-operate with the grace of God; and the scripture tells us the same, and makes it an argument and encouragement to us *to work out our own salvation*, because *God works in us both to will and to do of his own goodness*, Phil. ii. 12, 13. Besides, that it is the greatest and justest discouragement in the world to all endeavours of repentance and reformation, to tell men that they can do nothing in it. He that is sure of this, that he can do nothing in this work, is a fool if he make any attempt to become better, because he struggles with an impossibility; and if the work will be done at all, it will be done without him, and he neither can, nor ought to have any hand in it. But will any metaphor bear men out against so palpable an absurdity as this?

And yet after all, there is no force in these metaphors, to prove what they aim at by them. For if to be *dead in sin* signifies an utter impotency to goodness, then to be *dead to sin* must on the contrary signify an impossibility of sinning; for just as the unregenerate man is *dead in sin*, so he that is regenerate is said in scripture to be *dead to sin*: But yet the best of regenerate men, notwithstanding they are *dead to sin*, and *alive to God*, do offend in many things, and too frequently fall into sin. Why then should the metaphor be so strong on the one side, that a man who is said to be *dead in sin*, should not be able so much



much as to *co-operate* with the grace of God in the work of repentance and conversion? SERM.  
LIII.

In short, if this be true, that men in an unregenerate and unconverted state are perfectly *dead*, and have no more sense of spiritual things than a dead man hath of natural objects, then all precepts and exhortations to repentance, and all promises and threatenings to argue and persuade men thereto are vain, and to no purpose; and it would be every whit as proper and reasonable for us to preach in the *church-yard*, over the graves of dead men, as in the *church* to the unregenerate; because they can no more act and move towards their own recovery out of a state of sin and death, than the dead bodies can rise out of their graves.

But it is said, that the end of exhortations and promises is not to declare to men their *power*, but their *duty*. But if they be *insensible*, it is to as little purpose to declare to them their *duty*, as their *power*. Besides, it will be an hard thing to convince men that any thing is their *duty*, which at the same time we declare to them to be *out of their power*.

But this is *Pelagianism*, to say that of our selves we can repent and turn to God. And who says we can of *our selves* do this, besides the *Pelagians*? we affirm the necessity of God's grace hereto, and without the necessity of our *co-operating* with the grace of God. We say that without the powerful excitation and aid of God's grace, no man can repent and turn to God; but we say likewise, that God cannot be properly said to *aid* and *assist* those, who do nothing themselves.

But men *can do more than they do*, and therefore are justly condemned. Not in the work of conversion sure; if they can do *nothing at all*. But they can do more by way of *preparation* towards it. Suppose they do all they can towards it, will this save them, or will God upon this *irresistibly* work their conversion? no, they say, notwithstanding any preparatory

SERM. preparatory work that we can do, conversion  
 LIII. may not follow; how then does this mend the  
 matter?

But still they say the fault is in mens want of *will*, and not of *power*; *you will not come unto me, that ye might have life*. But can they *will* to come? no, that they cannot neither. Why then it is still want of *power* that hinders them. The offer of life is a very gracious offer to them that are guilty, and liable to death, as we all are; but not if the condition be utterly impossible to us, tho' the impossibility springs from our own fault, as I will plainly shew by a fair instance. A Prince offers a pardon to a traitor fast lockt in chains, if he will come to him and submit himself; but if he be still detained in chains, and the Prince do not some way or other help him to his liberty, 'tis so far from being a *favour* to offer him a pardon upon these terms, that it is a *cruel derision* of his misery, to say to him, *you will not come to me that you may be pardoned*; and this notwithstanding that his being cast into chains was the effect of his own crime and fault; the application is obvious. I should now proceed to answer an objection or two, and then to give a clear state of this matter, so as is most agreeable to scripture, and the attributes and perfections of God; but this I shall reserve for another discourse.

# SERMON LIV.

*The third  
Sermon on  
this Text.*

Of the Nature of Regeneration, and  
its Necessity, in order to Justifica-  
tion and Salvation.

---

GALAT. vi. 15.

*For in Christ Jesus, neither Circumcision availeth  
any thing, nor Uncircumcision; but a new  
Creature.*

THE point which I am upon from these SERM.  
words is, that *according to the terms of the* LIV.  
*Gospel, nothing will avail to our Justification,*  
*but the real renovation of our hearts and lives.*

For the full explication of this, I propounded to  
shew,

*First*, What is implied in this expression of the  
*new creature.*

*Secondly*, That this is the great condition of our  
justification and acceptance with God.

*Thirdly*, That it is highly reasonable that this  
should be the condition of our justification.

In speaking to the first of these, I have shewed,  
*1st*, What this metaphor doth certainly import; and  
*2dly*, that it doth not import what some would ex-  
tend it to, whereon to found such doctrines as these:

*First*, That as the Creation was an *irresistible* act  
of the divine Power, so is this *new creation*, or the  
conversion of a sinner.

*Secondly*, As creatures are *meerly passive* in their be-  
ing made, and contributed nothing at all to it, no  
more do we in our conversion and regeneration.

*Thirdly*,



336 *Of the Nature of Regeneration, and its Necessity,*

SERM. *Thirdly*, That as the creation of the several kinds  
 LIV. and ranks of creatures was effected *in an instant*, by  
 the powerful word of God, saying, *let such and such*  
*things be*, and immediately they were; so this *new*  
*creation is in an instant*, and admits of no degrees.

The *first* of these I have consider'd, and enter'd  
 upon the *second*; namely, that as the creatures were  
*meerly passive* in their being made, and contributed  
 nothing at all thereto, no more do we in our conver-  
 sion and regeneration.

This I told you does plainly make void all the  
 precepts and exhortations, and all the promises and  
 threatnings of scripture, to argue and persuade men  
 to repentance.

That which remains to be done upon this argu-  
 ment, is,

*First*, To answer an objection or two, which are  
 commonly urged by the assertors of this doctrine,  
 that we are *meerly passive* in the work of conversion.

*Secondly*, To give a clear state of this matter, so  
 as is most agreeable to scripture, and the attributes  
 and perfections of God. For the

*First*, The objections are these *three*.

1. That if we be not *meerly passive* in the work of  
 regeneration and conversion, we ascribe the whole  
 glory of this work to ourselves, and not to God.

Or, *2dly*, We do however extenuate or lessen the  
 grace of God, if there be any active concurrence  
 and endeavours of our own towards this change.

*3dly*, They ask St. Paul's question, *who maketh*  
*thee to differ?* and think it impossible to be answered,  
 if the efficacy of God's grace do depend upon our  
 concurrence and compliance with it. These are all  
 the material objections I know; to every one of which  
 I hope to give a very clear and sufficient answer.

1. *Objection*. If we be not *meerly passive* in the work  
 of regeneration and conversion, we ascribe the  
 whole glory of this work to ourselves, and not to  
 God. But that I certainly know this objection is  
 commonly

commonly made, and have seen it in very consider-  
 able Authors, I could not believe that men of so  
 good sense could make it. For this is to say, that if  
 we do any thing in this work, tho' we acknowledge  
 that what we do in it, we do by the assistance of  
 God's Grace, we ascribe it wholly to ourselves, and  
 rob God altogether of the glory of his grace; or in  
 plainer terms, it is to say, that tho' we say God does  
 never so much, and we but very little in this work,  
 yet if we do not say that God does *all*, and we *nothing*  
*at all*, we take the whole work to ourselves, and say  
 God does *nothing at all*; which let any one that con-  
 siderers what we say, judge whether we say so or no.

The Scripture, which never robs God of the glory  
 of his grace, does I'm sure ascribe our conversion  
 and repentance, our regeneration and sanctification  
 to several causes; to the holy Spirit of God, to his  
 Ministers, to his Word, and to ourselves. To the  
 holy Spirit of God, as the principal author, and ef-  
 ficient. Hence we are said *to be born of the Spirit,*  
*to be sanctified by the renewing of the Holy Ghost.* To  
 the Ministers of God, as the instruments of our con-  
 version. Hence they are said *to turn men to righteous-*  
*ness, to convert a sinner from the evil of his ways, to*  
*save souls from death, to save themselves, and them that*  
*bear them; to be our spiritual fathers, and to beget us*  
*in Christ.* To the word of God, as the subordinate  
 means and instruments of our conversion. Hence  
 we are said *to be begotten by the word of truth, to be*  
*sanctified by the truth.* And lastly, to ourselves, as  
 concurring some way or other to this work. Hence  
 we are said *to believe and repent, to turn from our evil*  
*ways and to turn to the Lord, to cleanse and purify our-*  
*selves.* Hence likewise are those frequent commands  
 in scripture, *to amend our ways and doings, to wash*  
*our hearts from wickedness, to repent and turn ourselves,*  
*and to make ourselves new hearts and new spirits.* So  
 that all these causes, the Spirit of God, his Mini-  
 sters, his Word, and we ourselves, do all some way

338 *Of the Nature of Regeneration, and its Necessity,*

SERM. or other concur and contribute to this effect. God  
 LIV. indeed is the principal, and hath so great an hand  
 in this work from beginning to end, that all the rest  
 are nothing in comparison, and we do well to ascribe  
 to him the glory of it, *that no flesh may glory in his*  
*fight*: But nevertheless in strictness of speech, suffi-  
 ciently warranted by scripture, the ministers of God,  
 and the word of God, and we ourselves do all co-  
 operate some way or other to our conversion, and re-  
 generation; and by ascribing to any of these such  
 parts as they truly have in this work, God is not  
 robbed of *any part* of the glory of his grace, much  
 less of the *whole*. Much less is it the ascribing it all  
 to ourselves, whom we affirm to have *the least part* in  
 it, nor worthy to be mention'd, in comparison of *the*  
*riches of God's grace* towards us. And yet unless we  
 do *something*, what can be the meaning of *making*  
*ourselves new hearts, and new spirits*? Is it only that  
 we should be *passive* to the *irresistible* operations of  
 God's grace? that is, that we should not hinder,  
 what we can neither hinder nor promote; that we  
 should so demean ourselves, as of necessity we must  
 whether we will or no. So then *to make ourselves*  
*new hearts and new spirits*, is to do nothing at all  
 towards the hindrance or furtherance of this work;  
 and if this be the meaning of it, it is a precept and  
 exhortation just as fit for *stones*, as for *men*; that is,  
 very improper for either.

2. *Objection*. But however, we do extenuate and  
 lessen the grace of God, if there be any active con-  
 currence and endeavours on our part towards this  
 change. For answer to this, *three things* deserve to  
 be consider'd.

*First*, It is very well worthy our consideration,  
 that they who make this objection, have the confi-  
 dence to pretend that *they* do not diminish the grace  
 of God, by confining it to a very small part of man-  
 kind in comparison; nay, they will needs face us down,  
 that by this very thing they do very much exalt and  
 magnify



magnify it, and that the grace of God is so much SERM.  
the greater, by how much the fewer they are that LIV.  
are partakers of it. But I hope they only mean that  
the grace is greater to themselves; (in which conceit  
there is commonly as much of envy as gratitude) but  
surely they cannot mean that the grace which is li-  
mited to a few, is greater in itself, and upon the  
whole matter, than that which is extended to a great  
many; it being a downright contradiction, to say  
that the grace of God is magnified by being confi-  
ned. For at this rate of reasoning, the lesser it is,  
the greater it must be, and by undeniable consequence  
would be greatest of all, if it were none at all. So  
that it seems the grace of God may be extenuated in  
favour of ourselves, but when we do so we must *say*  
we magnify it.

*Secondly,* But to come close to the objection; tho'  
it be true, that if God's grace in our conversion do  
not do all, it does not do so much as if it did all;  
yet this is really no injury or dishonour to the grace  
of God; and tho' in some sense it doth extenuate it,  
it doth not in truth and reality take off from the glo-  
ry of it. In my opinion, the grace and favour of a  
Prince is not the less in offering a pardon to a tray-  
tor, who puts forth his hand and gladly receives it,  
than if he forc'd it upon him whether he would or  
no. I am sure, it is in the first case much fitter to  
give it, and he on whom it is confer'd much better  
qualified to receive it. 'Tis no disparagement to a  
Prince's favour, that it is bestow'd on one who is  
in some measure qualified to receive it. But be it  
more or less in one case than the other, this is cer-  
tain, that in both cases the man owes his life to the  
great grace and goodness of his Prince; and I can-  
not see how it lessens the grace, that the miserable  
object of it, the guilty and condemned person, was  
either by his humble submission, or thankful accep-  
tance of it, in some degree better qualified to receive  
such a favour, than an obstinate refuser of it.

340 *Of the Nature of Regeneration, and its Necessity,*

SERM. *Thirdly*, which is the principal consideration of all,  
 LIV. We must take great heed, that while we endeavour  
 to make God to do *all* in the conversion of sinners,  
 we do not by this means charge upon him the ruin  
 and destruction of impenitent sinners, which I doubt  
 we should do, if we make the reason of their impenitency  
 and ruin their utter impotency and disability  
 to repent; and we certainly make this the reason of  
 their impenitency and ruin, if there be no other difference  
 but this between penitent and impenitent sinners,  
 namely, that in the one God works repentance  
 by an *irresistible* act of his power, so that he cannot  
 but repent, and denies this grace to the other, without  
 which he cannot possibly repent. But the scripture  
 chargeth the destruction of men upon themselves,  
 and lays their impenitency at their own door. *O Israel!*  
*thou hast destroyed thy self; but in me is thy help,*  
 Hosea xiii. 9. But *where* is the *help*, when the grace  
 absolutely necessary to repentance is denied? And  
 how is *their destruction of themselves*, if it is unavoidable,  
 let them do what they can? *Isa. v. 3, 4.* God  
 appeals to his people *Israel*, that nothing was wanting  
 on his part, that was fit and necessary to be done,  
 that they might bring forth the fruits of repentance,  
 and better obedience: *And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem,*  
*and men of Judah, judge I pray you between me and my vineyard:*  
*what could have been done more to my vineyard,*  
*that I have not done in it? Wherefore when I looked that it should*  
*bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?*  
 Is it true that God hath done all that was necessary,  
 to have brought them to repentance? Then if *irresistible*  
 grace be necessary, he afforded them *that*; but *that* was not  
 afforded them, because then they must unavoidably have  
 repented, and there had been no cause for this complaint:  
 If he did not afford it, but only the *outward means* of  
 repentance without the *inward grace* (as some say;) then  
 it is easy to judge why they did not repent; because  
*they could not*; and there seems to be no cause  
 either

either of wonder, or complaint. Besides that it will SERM.  
 be hard to justify that saying, *What could I have done* LIV.  
*more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?* when  
 it is acknowledg'd by the assertors of this doctrine,  
 that the main thing was not done, and that without  
 which all the rest signify'd nothing, leaving them  
 under the same impossibility of repentance, as if no-  
 thing at all had been done to them.

But now upon *our* supposition, that *sufficient grace*  
 was afforded to them, which they wilfully neglected  
 to make use of, the reason and equity of this com-  
 plaint is evident, and God is acquitted, as having  
 done what was needful on his part, and the sinner just-  
 ly condemned, for not concurring with the grace of  
 God as he might have done; which shews that we  
 are not *meerly passive* in this work; but something is  
 expected from us, after God hath done his part,  
 which if we neglect to do, *our destruction is of our*  
*selves*. Whereas the contrary supposition, upon pre-  
 tence of glorifying God's *grace*, by making him to  
 do *all* in the conversion of sinners, indangers the ho-  
 nour of his *justice*, by laying the impenitency of  
 sinners, and their ruin consequent upon it, at his  
 door; which is to advance one attribute of God up-  
 on the ruin of another; whereas it is a fundamental  
 principle of religion, to take care to reconcile the  
 attributes and perfections of God to one another;  
 for that is not a divine perfection, which contradicts  
 any other perfection.

The 3d *Objection* is grounded upon that question of  
 St. Paul, 1 Cor. iv. 7. *Who maketh thee to differ?* which  
 they think impossible to be answer'd, if the efficacy  
 of God's grace depend upon our concurrence and  
 compliance with it. For, say they, when God of-  
 fers his grace to two persons for their repentance, if  
 the true reason why the one repents, and the other  
 remains impenitent, be this, that the one complieth  
 with this grace of God, and yieldeth to it, the other  
 resists and stands out against it; then it is not the



342 *Of the Nature of Regeneration, and its Necessity,*

SERM. grace of God which makes the difference, for *that*  
 LIV. is equal to both, but something in themselves, and  
 so it is not *God that makes them to differ*, but *they themselves*.

But this question is impertinent to this case. The Apostle speaks it concerning spiritual gifts, upon account of which, they factiously admir'd some of the Apostles above others, and concerning *them* the question is very proper, *who maketh thee to differ?* Miraculous gifts were so order'd by God, that men were *meerly passive* in the receiving of them, and contributed nothing to the obtaining of them; and therefore if one had greater gifts than another, it was merely the pleasure of God that made the difference. But the case is not the same in the graces of God's Spirit, towards the obtaining and improving whereof we our selves may contribute something; our Saviour having assured us, that *to him that bath, shall be given*. And here the question is not proper, nor is it true *that the grace of God makes all the difference*. It is indeed the foundation of all the good that is in us: but our different improvement makes different attainments in grace and goodness. Among those to whom the talents were intrusted, what *made the difference* between the man *who wrapt his talent in the napkin, and buried it*, and those *who gained double by theirs*, but that *the one improv'd the grace confer'd on him, the other neglected it*, and this without any manner of reflection upon, or diminution of the grace of God, or any danger from St. Paul's question, *who maketh thee to differ?* Put the case, a pardon is offered to two malefactors, the one accepts, the other refuses it; *their own choice makes the difference between them*; but he that is saved is nevertheless beholden to the king's pardon for his life; and it were a senseless ingratitude in him, because he accepts the pardon, when the other refuseth it, to say that he did not owe his life to the grace and favour of his Prince, but might thank himself for it; whereas he  
 that

that was in a capacity to accept a pardon, was wholly due to the clemency of his Prince, who offered it to him when he no wise deserved it. In this case the thing plainly appears as it is, by which every man may see, that it is against common sense to pretend that the grace of God is destroyed, if there be any compliance on our part with it; that it is no grace, if it be not forced upon us, and we be not *meerly passive* in the reception of it. I proceed in the

*Second* place, to give a clear state of this matter, so as is most agreeable to the doctrine of the holy Scriptures, and the essential attributes and perfections of God. In order to which, I will give you a short view of the several opinions concerning this matter. And there are two extreme and two *middle* opinions, concerning the operation of God's grace in the conversion of a sinner.

The *first* of the *extream* opinions is, that which all this while I have been arguing against, namely, that all that are converted and regenerated, are wrought upon in an *irresistible* manner, and are *meerly passive* in it; and that those who are not thus wrought upon, their repentance and conversion is *impossible*. What the inconveniencies of this opinion are, I have shewed at large.

The other *extream* opinion is, that none are thus wrought upon, because it would be a violence and injury to man's natural liberty; but that *sufficient* grace is offered to all, one time or other, who live under the Gospel, which they may comply with or resist, and consequently if they be not brought to repentance, their impenitency and ruin is the effect of their own choice, and God is *free from the blood of all men*. But this opinion, tho' infinitely more reasonable than the other, seems not to have any necessary foundation either in Scripture or reason. There are some instances in Scripture of the conversion of men after a very *violent*, if not an *irresistible* manner, which seems to be attributed to a particular *predestination* of God; as

SERM.

*that of St. Paul, who says of himself, Gal. i. 15.*

LIV.

*that he was separated from his mother's womb to that work to which he was called; and the manner of his conversion was answerable to such a predestination; and there is nothing in reason against this, since it is no injury to any man to be made good and happy against his will.*

The two *middle* opinions are these. *First*, That *irresistible grace* is afforded to *all the elect*, and *sufficient grace* to all others who live under the Gospel (for of those only we speak, the case of others being peculiar, and belonging to the extraordinary mercy of God) but then they say, that none of those to whom this *sufficient grace* is afforded shall effectually comply with it and be saved. This opinion seems more moderate, and hath this advantage in it, that it acquits the justice of God in the condemnation of those, who having *sufficient grace* afforded to them, did yet notwithstanding continue impenitent; but yet it hath two great inconveniences in it.

*First*, That this supposition is to no purpose, as to any real effect for the salvation of men, because not one person more is saved, notwithstanding this *universal sufficient grace*, which they say is afforded to all; for they take it for granted it is never *effectual*; and then it seems very unreasonable to suppose, that a means *sufficient* to its end should *universally* prove *ineffectual*; nay, on the contrary, it is next to a demonstration against the *sufficiency* of a means, if *perpetually* and *in all instances* it fails of its end. This would tempt any man to think that surely there is some defect in it, or something that hinders the efficacy of it; if being *perpetually* and *generally* afforded, it doth *perpetually* and *universally* miscarry, without so much as *one instance* among so many millions to the contrary. So that this opinion seems rather to be contriv'd for a colour and shelter against some absurdity, which men know not how to avoid otherwise,

than



than to serve any good purpose, or to be embraced  
for the truth and probability of it.

SERM.  
LIV.

The other *middle* opinion is, that some are converted in an *irresistible* manner, when God pleaseth, and whom he designs to be extraordinary examples, and instruments for the good of others, and that *sufficient* grace is afforded to others, which is *effectual* to the salvation of *many*, and *rejected* by a *great many*.

And this avoids all the inconveniency of the other opinion, and is evidently most agreeable both to the tenor of Scripture and to the best notions which men have concerning the attributes and perfections of God, and gives greatest encouragement to the endeavours of men. It agrees very well with the solemn declarations of Scripture, that God is not wanting on his part, to afford men sufficient means to bring them to repentance; that he *desires not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his wickedness and live*; that *he would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth*, that *he would not that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*, that *mens destruction is of themselves*. And this makes all the exhortations and motives of Scripture to repentance to be of some force and significance, and gives encouragement to the resolutions and endeavours of men to become better. This clearly acquits the justice of God in the condemnation of impenitent sinners, and fixeth the reason of their ruin upon their own choice. This perfectly reconciles the operation and assistance of God's grace in our conversion and regeneration, in our sanctification and perseverance in a good course, with the concurrence of our own endeavours, and makes those plain texts of Scripture have some sense and significance in them; *work out your own salvation*; *Repent and turn your selves from all your evil ways*; *Make ye new hearts and new spirits*. These are more than a thousand metaphors to convince a man, that we may and ought to do something towards our repentance and  
conversion.

SERM. conversion. And if any man be sure that we neither

LIV. do nor can do any thing in this work, then I am  
 W sure that these texts signifie nothing. Finally, those  
 texts which speak most clearly of the necessity of the  
 divine grace and assistance, to our doing of any thing  
 that is spiritually good, do suppose something to be  
 done on our part. That of our Saviour, *without me  
 you can do nothing*, implies that *with* his grace and  
 assistance *we can*. That of St. Paul *I am able to do all  
 things through Christ strengthening me*, implies, that  
 what we do *by the strength of Christ* is truly *our own  
 act*; *I am able to do all things*. And this does not in  
 the least prejudice nor obscure the glory of God's  
 grace. St. Paul it seems knew very well how to re-  
 concile these two, and to give the grace of God its  
 due, without rejecting all concurrence of our own  
 industry and endeavour, 1 Cor. xv. 10. *But by the  
 grace of God I am what I am; and his grace which was  
 bestowed upon me was not in vain*; not because it was  
*irresistable*, and he *meerly passive* in the reception of  
 it; but because he did *concur* and *co-operate* with it.  
 So he tells us, *his grace that was bestowed upon me  
 was not in vain, but I laboured more abundantly than  
 they all; yet not I, but the grace of God which was with  
 me*. So that our concurrence and endeavour in the  
 doing of any thing that is good, does not derogate  
 from the grace of God; provided that we ascribe  
 the good which we do to the assistance of divine  
 grace to which it is incomparably more due than to  
 our own activity and endeavour. And so St. Paul  
 does, *I labour'd abundantly; yet not I, but the grace  
 of God which was with me*.

So that the glory of God's grace may be advanced  
 to it due pitch, without asserting that we are *meerly pas-  
 sive* to the operations of it. God's grace may be *abun-  
 dantly bestowed* upon us, and yet we may *labour abun-  
 dantly*; God may *work in us to will and to do*, and yet we  
 may *work out our own salvation*. I have done with the *se-  
 cond doctrine* grounded upon this metaphor of a *new  
 creature*.

SERMON

# S E R M O N LV. The Fourth Sermon on this Text.

Of the Nature of Regeneration, and its Necessity, in order to Justification and Salvation.

---

G A L A T. vi. 15.

*For in Christ Jesus, neither Circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but a new Creature.*

**I**N discoursing on these words, that which I SERM. was last upon was to shew, that this metaphor LV. of a *new creature* doth not import what some would extend it to, and that so as to found doctrines of great consequence upon the single strength of this, and other like metaphors, viz. such doctrines as these *three*:

*First*, That as the creation was by an *irresistible* act of the divine power, so is this *new creation*, or the conversion of a sinner.

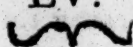
*Secondly*, That as creatures were *merely passive* in their being made, and contributed nothing at all thereto, no more do we to our conversion and regeneration.

*Thirdly*, That as the creation was *in an instant*, only by the powerful word of God, so this new creation is *in an instant*, and admits of *no degrees*. The *two* first of these I have spoken to, and shewed, that as they had no necessary foundation in this and the like metaphors of Scripture, so they are contrary to reason and experience, and the plain and constant tenor of Scripture, which is the rule and measure



348 *Of the Nature of Regeneration, and its Necessity,*

SERM. measure of Christ's doctrine. I proceed now to con-  
 LV. sider the

 *Third doctrine* which is grounded upon this metaphor, namely, that as the creation of the several ranks and orders of creatures was *in an instant*, and effected by the powerful word of God, saying, *let such and such things be*, and immediately they were; so this *new creation* is *in an instant*, and admits of *no steps and degrees*. And this doctrine is nothing else but a farther pursuit of the metaphor; and admitting the *two* former doctrines to be true, and well grounded upon this metaphor, this *third* doctrine follows well enough from them, for it is agreeable enough, that that which is effected by an *irresistible* act of omnipotence, without any concurrence or operation on our part, should be done *in an instant* and *all at once*. Not that this is necessary, but that it is reasonable; for why should omnipotence use delays, and take time and proceed *by degrees* in the doing of that, which with the same ease it can do *at once*, and *in an instant*; especially considering how well this suits with the other metaphors of Scripture, as well as with this of *a new creation*, viz. the metaphor of *regeneration* and *resurrection*. A child is born *at once*, and the dead shall be raised *in a moment*, *in the twinkling of an eye*.

But notwithstanding all this plausible appearance and conspiracy of metaphors, I shall shew that this doctrine of the conversion and regeneration of a sinner being effected *in an instant*, and *all at once*, is not well grounded either upon scripture, or experience. Not but that God can do so if he pleaseth, and work this change in some much sooner and quicker than in others; but there is nothing either in scripture or experience to persuade us that this is the *usual*, much less the *constant* and *unalterable* method of God's grace in the conversion of a sinner, to bring it about *in an instant*, without any sensible *steps and degrees*.

But

But for the full clearing of this matter, I shall proceed by these steps: SERM.  
LV.

*First*, I shall shew upon what mistaken grounds and principles this doctrine relies, besides the metaphors already mention'd, which I have shewn to be of no force to prove the thing.

*Secondly*, I shall plainly shew what *regeneration* is; by which it will appear, that it is not *necessarily effected in an instant*, and *at once*, but admits of *degrees*.

*Thirdly*, That it is evidently so in experience of the *ordinary* method of God's grace, both in those who are regenerated by a pious and religious education, and in those who are reclaimed from a vicious course of life.

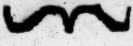
*Fourthly*, That all this is very consonant and agreeable to what the scripture plainly and constantly declares concerning it.

*First*, I shall discover several mistakes upon which this doctrine is grounded, besides the metaphors already mention'd, and which I have shewn to be of no force to prove the thing, *viz.* That regeneration is *in an instant*, and admits of *no degrees*. As,

1. That *regeneration* and *sanctification* are not only different expressions, but do signify *two* things really different. But this is a gross mistake; for *regeneration* and *sanctification* are but different expressions of the self-same thing; for *regeneration* is a metaphor which the Scripture useth to express our *translation* and *change from one state to another*, from a state of sin and wickedness, to a state of grace and holiness, as if we were *born over again*, and were the *children of another father*, and from being the *children of the devil*, did become the *children of God*; and *sanctification* is our being *made holy*, our being *purified* and *cleansed* from sin and impurity. And hence it is that *regeneration* and *sanctification* are attributed to the same causes principal and instrumental to *the spirit of God*, and to *the word of God*; we are said to be *born of the spirit*,  
and

350 *Of the Nature of Regeneration, and its Necessity,*

SERM. and to be *sanctified by the Holy Ghost; to be begot-*

LV. *ten of the word of truth, and to be sanctified by the*  
 *truth, which is the word of God. So that the Scrip-*  
*ture speaks of them as the same thing; and they*  
*must needs be so; for if sanctification be the ma-*  
*king of us holy, and regeneration maketh us holy;*  
*then regeneration is sanctification.*

2. It is said, that *regeneration* only signifies our *first entrance* into this state, and *sanctification* our *progress* and *continuance* in it. But this likewise is a great mistake. For tho' it be true, that *regeneration* doth signify our *first entrance* into this state, yet it is not true, that it *only* signifies that; for it is used likewise in Scripture to signify our *continuance* in that state; for Christians are said to be the *children of God*, and consequently in a *regenerate* state, not only in the *instant* of this change, but during their *continuance* in it. Besides that our *first change* is as well call'd our *sanctification* as our *progress* and *continuance* in a state of holiness. So that neither in this is there any difference between *regeneration* and *sanctification*. They do both of them signify both our *first entrance* into an holy state, and our *continuance* and *progress* in it; tho' *regeneration* do more frequently denote the *making* of this change, and our *first entrance* into it.

3. It is said that one of the main differences between *regeneration* and *sanctification* is this, that *regeneration* is incapable of *degrees*, and all that are regenerate are *equally* so, and one regenerate person is not *more or less* regenerate than another; whereas *sanctification* is a *gradual progress* from one degree of holiness to another, and of them that are truly sanctified and holy, one may be *more sanctified* and *more holy* than another. But this likewise is a meer fancy and imagination, without any real ground. For as an *unregenerate* state does plainly admit of *degrees*, so likewise doth the *regenerate*, and for the same reason. That an *unregenerate* state admits of  
*degrees*



*degrees* is evident, in that some unregenerate persons SERM.  
 are *more wicked* than others, and thereby *more the* LV.  
*children of wrath, and the Devil*, than others, which  
 are the Scripture expressions concerning the *degrees*  
 of mens wickedness and impiety. In like manner,  
 they that are *more holy, and more like God*, are *more*  
*the children of God*; and to be *more a child of God*,  
 is surely to be *more regenerate*, that is, *more renewed*  
*after the image of God* which consists in *righteous-*  
*ness and true holiness*. So that it is a meer preca-  
 rious assertion, and evidently false to affirm, that  
*regeneration* doth not admit of *degrees*, and that one  
 is not *more regenerate* than another.

4thly, and lastly, They ground this conceit upon  
 the doctrine of the schools, which teach, that in  
*regeneration and conversion* all the habits of grace  
 are infused, *simul & semel, together and at once*. I  
 confess I have no regard, much less a veneration  
 for the doctrine of *the schools*, where it differs  
 from that of *the holy Scriptures*, which say not one  
 word of *infused habits*, which yet are much talked  
 of in divinity; and to speak the truth, these words  
 serve only to obscure the thing. For to say, that  
 in *conversion* the *habits* of all graces and virtues are  
*infused together and at once*, is to say, that in an  
*instant* men that were vicious before in several  
 kinds, are by an omnipotent act of God's grace,  
 and by a new principle infused into them, endued  
 with the habits of the contrary graces and virtues,  
 and are as chaste, and temperate, and just and meek,  
 and humble, as if by the frequent practice of these  
 virtues they had become so. That this *may be*, and  
*sometimes* is, I am so far from denying, that I be-  
 lieve it to be so. Some men, by an *extraordinary*  
 power of God's grace upon their hearts, are *sud-*  
*denly changed*, and strangely reclaimed from a very  
 wicked and vicious, to a very religious and virtu-  
 ous course of life; and that which others attain  
 to by slower degrees, and great conflicts with  
 themselves,

SERM. themselves, before they can gain the upper hand

LV. of their lusts, these arrive at *all on a sudden*, by a  
 ~~~~~ mighty resolution wrought in them by the power  
 of God's grace, and as it were a new byass and
 inclination put upon their souls, equal to an habit
 gain'd by long use and custom. This God *sometimes*
 does, and when he does, it may in some sense
 be call'd *the infusion of the habits of grace and virtue*
together, and at once; because the man is hereby
 endowed with a principle of equal force and power
 with habits that are acquir'd by long use and
 practice. A strong and vigorous faith is the principle
 and root of all graces and virtues, and may
 have such a powerful influence upon the resolutions
 of our minds, and the government of our actions,
 that from this principle all graces and virtues may
 spring and grow up by degrees into habits; but
 then this principle is not *formally* but *virtually*, in
 the power and efficacy of it, *the infusion of the habits*
of grace and virtue; and even in those persons
 in whom this change is so *suddenly*, and as it were
at once, I doubt not but that the habits of several
 graces and virtues are afterwards attained by the
 frequent practice of them, in the virtue of this
 powerful principle of the faith of the gospel, as I
 shall shew in the progress of this discourse. And
 this I doubt not was very frequent and visible in
 many of the first converts to christianity; especially
 of those, who from the abominable idolatry and
 impiety of heathenism were gained to the christian
 religion. The spirit of God did then work very
 miraculously, as well in the cures of spiritual as
 of bodily diseases. But then to make this the rule
 and standard of God's ordinary proceedings in the
 conversion and regeneration of men, is equally unreasonable,
 as still to expect miracles for the cure
 of diseases; and 'tis certain in experience, that this
 is not God's *ordinary* method in the conversion of
 sinners, as I shall fully shew by and by.

Secondly,

Secondly, I shall shew what *regeneration* is, by which it will plainly appear, that there is no necessity that it should be effected *in an instant*, and *at once*, but that it will admit of *degrees*. I do not deny that it may be *in an instant*, and *at once*. The power of God is able to do this, and *sometimes* does it *very thoroughly*, and *very suddenly*. But the question is, whether there be a *necessity* it should be so, and *always* be so. Now *regeneration* is the change of a man's state, from a state of *sin* to a state of *holiness*; which because it is an entrance upon a new kind or course of life, it is fitly resembled to *regeneration*, or a *new birth*; to a *new creation*, the man being as it were *quite chang'd* or *made over again*, so as not to be, as to the main purpose and design of his life, *the same man* he was before. This is a plain sensible account of the thing, which every one may easily understand. Now there is nothing in reason, why a man may not *gradually* be changed and arrive at this state *by degrees*; as well as after this change is made, and he arrived at this state of a regenerate man, he may *by degrees* grow and improve in it. But *the latter* no man doubts of, but that a man that is in a state of *grace*, may *grow and improve* in *grace*; and there is as little reason to question why a man may not *come to this state by degrees*, as well as *leap into it at once*.

All the difficulty I know of in this matter, is a meer nicety, that there is *an instant*, in which every thing begins, and therefore *regeneration* is *in an instant*; so that the instant before the man arrived at this state, it could not be said *that he was regenerate*; and the instant after he is in this state, it cannot be denied that he is so. But this is idle subtilty, just as if a man should prove that an house was built *in an instant*, because it could not be said *to be built*, 'till the instant it was *finish'd*; tho' for all this, nothing is more certain than that it was built *by degrees*. Or, suppose the time of

354 *Of the Nature of Regeneration, and its Necessity,*

SERM. arriving at man's estate be at *one and twenty*, does

LV. it from hence follow, that a man does not grow to be a man *by degrees*, but is made a man *in an instant*; because just before *one and twenty* he was not at man's estate, and just then he was? Not but that God, if he please, can make a man *in an instant*, as he did *Adam*; but it is not necessary from this example, that all men should be made so, much less does it follow from this vain subtilty. This is just the case. All the while the man is tending towards a regenerate state, and is struggling with his lusts, 'till by the power of God's grace and his own resolution, he get the victory; all the while he is under the sense and conviction of his sinful and miserable state, and sorrowing for the folly of his past life, and coming to an effectual purpose and resolution of changing his course; and it may be several times thrown back by the temptations of the devil, and the power of evil habits, the weakness and instability of his own purpose; 'till at last, by the grace of God following and assisting him, he comes to a firm resolution of a better life, which resolution governs him for the future; I say all this while, which in some persons is longer, in others shorter, according to the power of evil habits, and the different degrees of God's grace afforded to men; all this time the work of *regeneration* is going on; and tho' a man cannot be said to be *in a regenerate state*, 'till that very instant that the principle of grace and his good resolution have got the upper hand of his lusts; yet it is certain for all this, that the work of *regeneration* was not effected in an instant. This is plainly and truly the case, as I shall shew in the

Third particular I propounded, namely, that it is evident from experience, of the *ordinary* methods of God's grace, both in those who are regenerate by a pious and religious education, and those who are reclaimed from a vicious course of life.

The

The first sort, namely, those who are brought to SERM.
goodness by a religious and virtuous education; LV.
these (at least, so far as my observation reacheth)  make up a very considerable part of the number of the *regenerate*, that is, of *good men*. And tho' it be certain, considering the universal corruption and degeneracy of human nature, that there is a real change made in them, by the operation of God's grace upon their minds, yet it is as certain in experience, that this change is made in very many, by very *silent* and *insensible degrees*, 'till at length the seeds of religion, which were planted in them by a good education, do visibly prevail over all the evil inclinations of corrupt nature, so as to sway and govern the actions of their lives; and when the principles of grace and goodness do *apparently prevail*, we may conclude them *to be in a regenerate state*, tho' perhaps very few of these can give any account of the particular time and occasion of this change. For things may be seen in their *effect*, which were never very sensible in their *cause*. And it is very reasonable that such persons who never lived in any evil course should escape those pangs and terrors which unavoidably happen unto others, from a course of actual sin, and the guilt of a wicked life; and if there be any such persons as I have described, who are in this *gradual* and *insensible* manner regenerated, and made good; this is a demonstration, that there is *no necessity* that this change should be *in an instant*, it being so frequently found to be otherwise in experience.

And as for others, who are visibly reclaimed from a notorious wicked course, in these we likewise frequently see this change *gradually* made, by strong impressions made upon their minds, most frequently by the word of God; sometimes by his providence, whereby they are convinc'd of the evil and danger of their course, and awakened to consideration, and melted into sorrow and repentance; and perhaps exercis'd with great terrors of conscience, till at length by the grace of God, they come

356 *Of the Nature of Regeneration, and its Necessity,*

SERM. to a fixt purpose and resolution of forsaking their
 LV. sins, and turning to God; and after many strugg-
 lings and conflicts with their lusts, and the strong
 byas of evil habits, this resolution, assisted by the
 grace of God, doth effectually prevail, and make
 a real change both in the temper of their minds, and
 the course of their lives; and when this is done, and
 not before, they are said to be *regenerate*. But all
 the while this was a doing, the *new man* was form-
 ing, and the work of regeneration was going on;
 and it was perhaps a very considerable time from the
 first beginning of it, till it came to a fixt and settled
 state. And this I doubt not in experience of most
 persons who are reclaimed from a vicious course of
 life, is found to be the usual and ordinary method of
 God's grace in their conversion. And if so, it is
 in vain to pretend that a thing is done *in an instant*,
 which by so manifold experience is found to take
 up a great deal of time, and to be effected *by degrees*.

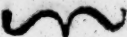
And whereas some men are pleased to call all this
 the *preparatory* work to regeneration, but not the
 regeneration itself, this is an idle contention about
 words. For if these preparations be a degree of
 goodness, and a gradual tendency towards it, then
 the work is begun by them, and during the continu-
 ance of them, is all the while a doing; and tho' it
 be hard to fix the point or instant when a man just
 arrives at this state, and not before, yet it is very
 sensible when a man is in it, and this change when
 it is really made, will soon discover itself by plain
 and sensible effects.

Fourthly, and lastly, All this is very agreeable to
 the plain and constant tenor of scripture, *Isa. i. 16.*
 where the Prophet exhorts to this change, he
 speaks of it as a *gradual* thing, *Wash ye, make you
 clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine
 eyes; cease to do evil, learnt to do well*; that is, break
 off evil and vicious habits, and gain the contrary
 habits of virtue and goodness by the exercise of it.
 The scripture speaks of some, as farther from a state
 of

of grace than others, Jer. xiii. 23. *Can the Æthio-
pian change his skin, or the Leopard his spots? then
may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil;* SERM. LV.
plainly declaring the great difficulty, equal almost
to a natural impossibility, of reclaiming those to
goodness, who have been long habituated to an e-
vil course. And the scripture speaks of some as
nearer to a state of grace than others. Our Saviour
tells the young man in the gospel, who said *he had
kept the commands of God from his youth*; that *he was
not far from the kingdom of God*. But now, if by an
irresistible act of God's power, this change be made
in an instant, and cannot otherwise be made, how is
one man nearer to a state of grace, or farther from it
than another? If all that are made good, must be
made so *in an instant* or not at all, then no man is
nearer being made good than another; for if he
were nearer to it, he might sooner be made so; but
that cannot be, if all must be made good *in an in-
stant*; for sooner than *that* no man can be made so.
If the similitude of our *being dead in sins and trespasses*
be strictly taken, no man is nearer a resurrection to
a new life than another; as he that died but a week
ago, is as far from being raised to life again, as he
that died a thousand years ago; the resurrection of
both requires an Omnipotent act, and to *that* both
are equally easy.

The two parables of our Saviour, Matth. xiii. 31,
33. are by many interpreters understood of the
gradual operation of grace upon the hearts of men.
*That wherein the kingdom of heaven is liken'd to a
grain of mustard-seed, which being sown was the least
of all seeds, but by degrees grew up to be the greatest
of herbs; and to leaven, which a woman took and hid
in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened:*
intimating the progress of God's grace, which by
degrees diffuseth itself over the whole temper of a
man's mind, into all the actions of his life. To be-
sure the parable of the seed which fell upon good ground,

SERM. does represent the efficacy of the word of God, accompanied by his grace, upon the minds of men, and *that is said to spring up, and increase, and to bring forth fruit with patience*; which surely does express to us the *gradual* operation of God's word and grace in the renovation and change of a man's heart and life.

LV.


The New Testament indeed speaks of the sudden change of many upon the first preaching of the Gospel, which I have told you before is not a standard of the ordinary method of God's grace; the not considering of which, hath been a great cause of all the mistakes in this matter. 'Tis true, those which were thus converted to the belief of the Gospel, their faith was a *virtual principle* of all grace and virtue, tho' not *formally the habit* of every particular grace. St. Paul himself, who was a prime instance of this kind, speaks as if he acquir'd the grace of contentment by great consideration, and diligent care of himself in several conditions; not as if the habit of this grace had been infused into him at once, *Phil. v. 11, 12. I have learn'd in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; every where and in all things I am instructed, both to be full, and to be hungry; both to abound, and to suffer need.* And thus I have done with the *first* thing I propounded to consider, namely, the true and just importance of this metaphor of *the new creation*. The *two* particulars which remain, I shall, by God's assistance, finish in my next discourse.

SERMON

SERMON LVI.

*The Fifth
Sermon on
this Text.*

Of the Nature of Regeneration, and its Necessity, in order to Justification and Salvation.

GALAT. vi. 15.

For in Christ Jesus, neither Circumcision availeth any thing, nor Uncircumcision; but a new Creature.

THE *observation* I am still upon from these words is this, *viz.* That in the christian religion nothing will avail to our justification, but the renovation of our hearts and lives, exprest here by a *new creature*. In treating of which, I propos'd the doing of *three* things.

SERM.
LVI.

First, To shew the true import of this metaphor of a *new creature*.

Secondly, To shew that this is the great condition of our justification; And,

Thirdly, That it is highly reasonable that it should be so.

In treating of the *first* of these particulars, I have consider'd some doctrines as founded upon this metaphor which I have shewn at large not only to have no foundation in scripture, or reason or experience; but also to be very unreasonable in themselves, and contrary to the plain and constant tenor of scripture, and to the ordinary method of God's grace in the regeneration of men, whether by a religious and virtuous education, or in those who are reclaim'd from a notorious wicked course of life. And that I have

SERM. so long insisted upon this argument, and handled it
 LVI. in a more contentious way than is usual with me, did not proceed from any love to controversy, which I am less fond of every day than other; but from a great desire to put an end to these controversies, and quarrellings in the dark, by bringing them to a clear state and plain issue, and likewise to undeceive good men concerning some current notions and doctrines, which I do really believe to be dishonourable to God, and contrary to the plain declarations of scripture, and a cause of great perplexity and discomfort to the minds of men, and a real discouragement to the resolutions and endeavours of becoming better. Upon which considerations I was strongly urgent to search these doctrines to the bottom, and to contribute what in me lay, to the rescuing of good men from the disquiet and entanglement of them.

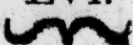
I will conclude this matter with a few cautions, not unworthy to be remember'd by us; That we would be careful so to ascribe all *good* to God, that we be sure we ascribe nothing to him that is *evil*, or any ways unworthy of him; That we do not make him the sole author of our salvation, in such a way, as will unavoidably charge upon him the final impenitency and ruin of a great part of mankind; That we do not so magnify the grace of God, as to make his precepts and exhortations signify nothing; such as these, *Make ye new hearts, and new spirits, strive to enter in at the strait gate*; where, if by the *strait gate* be meant the difficulty of our *first entrance* upon a religious course, that is of our conversion and regeneration, I cannot imagine how it is possible to reconcile our being *meerly passive* in this work, and doing *nothing at all* in it, with our Saviour's precept of *striving to enter in at the strait gate*; unless to be *very active*, and to be *meerly passive* about the same thing be all one, and an *earnest contention and endeavour* be the same thing with *doing nothing*. Again, That we do not make the utmost degeneracy and depravation which men ever arrived at by the greatest abuse of themselves, and

and the most vile and wicked practices, the standard SERM.
of an unregenerate state, and of the common condi- LVI.
tion of all men by nature. And lastly, That we do
not make some particular instances in scripture, of
the strange and sudden conversion of some persons
(as namely, of St. *Paul* and the Jaylor, in the *Acts*)
the common rule and measure of every man's conver-
sion; so that unless a man be as it were struck down
by a light and power from heaven, and taken with
a fit of trembling, and frightened almost out of his
wits, or find in himself something equal to this, he
can have no assurance of his conversion, whereas a
much surer judgment may be made of the sincerity
of a man's conversion, by the real effects of this
change, than by the manner of it. This our Sa-
viour hath taught us, by that apt resemblance of *the*
operation of God's Spirit to the blowing of the wind,
of the original cause whereof, and of the reason of
its ceasing or continuance, and why it blows stronger
or gentler, this way or that way, we are altogether
ignorant; but *that it is*, we are sensible from the
sound of it, *John iii. 8. The wind bloweth where it*
listeth, and thou hearest the sound of it, but canst not
tell whence it cometh, nor whither it goeth: So is every
one that is born of the Spirit. The effects of God's
holy Spirit in the regeneration of men are sensible,
tho' the manner and degrees of his operation upon
the souls of men are so various, that we can give no
account of them; by which, one wou'd think our
Saviour had sufficiently caution'd us, not to reduce
the operations of God's grace and holy Spirit in the
regeneration of men, to any certain rule or standard,
but chiefly to regard the sensible effects of this secret
work upon the hearts and lives of men.

And after all, it is in vain to contend by any ar-
guments against clear and certain experience. If we
plainly see that many are *insensibly* changed, and
made good by pious education *in the nurture and ad-*
monition of the Lord; and that some who have long
lived

362 *Of the Nature of Regeneration, and its Necessity,*

SERM. lived in a prophane neglect and contempt of religion,

LVI.  are by the secret power of God's word and holy Spirit, upon calm consideration, without any great terrors and amazement, visibly changed and brought to a better mind and course; it is in vain in these cases to pretend that this change is not real, because the manner of it is not answerable to some instances which are recorded in scripture, or which we have observ'd in our experience; and because these persons cannot give such an account of the time and manner of their conversion, as is agreeable to these instances; which is just as if I should meet a man beyond sea, whom I had known in *England*, and would not believe that he had cross'd the Seas, because he said he had a smooth and easy passage, and was wafted over by a gentle wind, and could tell no stories of storms and tempests.

And thus I have fully and faithfully endeavour'd to open to you the just importance of this phrase or expression in the text, of *the new creature*, or *the new creation*. I proceed to the

Second particular I propounded, namely, that the real renovation of our hearts and lives, is according to the terms of the Gospel, and the christian religion, the great condition of our justification and acceptance with God, and that this is the same in sense and substance with those phrases in the parallel texts to this, of *faith perfected by charity*, and of *keeping the commandments of God*.

That according to the terms of the Gospel, the great condition of our justification and acceptance with God, is the real renovation of our hearts and lives, is plain, not only from this text, which affirms, that in the christian religion nothing will avail us but *the new creature*; but likewise from many other clear texts of scripture; and this, whether by justification be meant our first justification upon our faith and repentance, or our continuance in this state, or our final justification by our solemn acquittal and absolution at the great day, which in scripture is called *salvation*, and *eternal life*. That

That this is the condition of our first justification, SERM. LVI.
that is, of the forgiveness of our sins, and our being received into the grace and favour of God, is plain from all those texts, where this change is expressed by our *repentance* and *conversion*, by our *regeneration* and *renovation*, by our *purification* and *sanctification*, or by any other terms of the like importance. For under every one of these notions, this change is made the condition of the forgiveness of our sins, and acceptance to the favour of God.

Under the notion of *repentance* and *conversion*, Acts ii. 38. *Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins.* Act. iii. 19. *Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.* Upon the same account, the penitent acknowledgment of our sins, which is an essential part of repentance, is made a condition of the forgiveness of them, 1 John i. 9. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* Under the notion of *regeneration* and *renovation*, 2 Cor. v. 17. *If any man be in Christ, that is, become a true Christian, which is all one with being in a justified state, he is a new creature; old things are past away, behold all things are become new.* Tit. iii. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. where the Apostle declares at large, what change is requir'd to put us into a justified state, and to entitle us to the inheritance of eternal life; *for we our selves were also sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.* But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, that is, not for any precedent righteousness of ours, for we were great sinners, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

364 *Of the Nature of Regeneration, and its Necessity,*

SERM. *life.* So that the change of our former temper, and
 LVI. conversion and regeneration, and *the renewing of the*
holy Ghost, is antecedently necessary to our justification, that is, to the pardon of our sins, and our restitution to the favour of God, and the hope of eternal life. So likewise under the notion of *purification and sanctification*, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11. where the Apostle enumerates several sins and vices, which will certainly exclude men from the favour and kingdom of God, from which we must be cleansed, before we can be justified or saved; *know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.* 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18. where the Apostle likewise makes our *purification* a condition of our being received into the favour of God, and reckon'd into the number of his children; *touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.* And that by *not touching the unclean thing*, is here certainly meant our sanctification and purification from sin, is evident from what immediately follows in the beginning of the next chapter; *having therefore these promises, dearly beloved! let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God;* that is, having this encouragement, that upon this condition we shall be received to the favour of God, let us purify ourselves, that we may be capable of this great blessing.

And our continuance in this state of grace and favour with God, depends upon our perseverance in holiness; for *if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.*

And lastly, this is also the condition of our final justification, and absolution by the sentence of the
 great

great day, *Mat. v. 8. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.* *John iii. 3. Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.* *Heb. xii.* SERM. LVI.

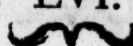
14. *Follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.* 1 *John iii. 3.* the Apostle there speaking of the blessed sight and enjoyment of God, tells us what we must do, if ever we hope to be partakers of it; *every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure.*

And this condition here mention'd in the text, of our being *new creatures*, is the same in sense and substance with those expressions which we find in the two parallel texts to this, where *faith which is perfected by charity*, and *keeping the commandments of God*, are made the condition of our justification and acceptance with God. *Gal. v. 6. In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith, which is consummate, or made perfect by charity;* and *1 Cor. vii. 19. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing; but the keeping of the commandments of God.* It is evident that the design and meaning of these three texts is the same, and therefore these three expressions of *the new creature*, and of *faith perfected by charity*, and of *keeping the commandments of God*, do certainly signify the same thing. That *the new creature* signifies the change of our state, from a state of disobedience and sin, to a state of obedience and holiness of life, I have shewn at large; and the Apostle explaining this *new creation*, most expressly tells us, *Ephes. ii. 10. We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them;* and *Colos. iii. 10, 12, 13, 14.* where the Apostle tells them, that they ought to give testimony of their renovation, and having put on *the new man*, by all the fruits of obedience and goodness; *ye have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him. Put on therefore as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering, forbearing*

366 *Of the Nature of Regeneration and its Necessity,*

SERM. *bearing one another, and forgiving one another; and*

LVI. *above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfection. And the Apostle St. Peter tells us, that our regeneration, which he calls sanctification of the spirit, is unto obedience, 1 Pet. i. 2. So that our renovation consisteth in the principle and practice of obedience, and a good life; and what is this but faith perfected by charity? And charity the Apostle tells us is the fulfilling of the law; and what is the fulfilling of the law, but keeping the commandments of God? And keeping the commandments of God, or at least a sincere resolution of obedience, when there is not time and opportunity for the tryal of it, is in scripture as expressly made a condition both of our present and final justification and acceptance with God, as faith is, and in truth is the same with a living and operative faith, and a faith that is consummate, and made perfect by charity. Acts x. 34, 35. Of a truth, I perceive (saith St. Peter) that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him; which speech does as plainly, as words can do any thing, declare to us upon what terms all mankind, of what condition or nation soever, may find acceptance with God. Rom. ii. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. Who will render to every man according to his deeds, to them who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life: but to them who are contentious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness; indignation and wrath; tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil; of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile: but glory, honour, and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile. As to our acceptance with God, and the rewards of another world, it matters not whether Jew or Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised; that which maketh the difference, is obeying the truth, or obeying unrighteousness; working good, or doing evil; these are the things which will avail to our justification, or condemnation at the great day.*

day. To the same purpose is that saying of the A-SERM. postle to the *Hebrews*, chap. v. 9. that *Christ is the LVI.*
author of eternal salvation to them that obey him. 

I will conclude this matter with two remarkable sayings, the one towards the beginning, the other towards the end of the Bible, to satisfy us that this is the tenor of the holy Scriptures, and the constant doctrine of it from the beginning to the end. *Gen. iv. 7.* It is God's speech to *Cain*, *If thou dost well, shalt thou not be accepted?* And *Rev. xxii. 14.* *Blessed are they, who do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.*

And thus I have done with the *second* thing I propounded, which was to shew, that according to the terms of the Gospel, and the christian religion, the real renovation of our hearts and lives is the great condition of our justification and acceptance with God, and that this in sense and substance is the same with *faith made perfect by charity, and keeping the commandments of God.*

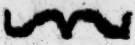
The *third* and last particular remains to be spoken to, namely, That it is highly reasonable that this should be the condition of our justification, and acceptance to the favour of God; and that upon these *two* accounts.

First, For the honour of God's holiness.

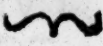
Secondly, In order to the qualifying of us for the favour of God, and the enjoyment of him, for the pardon of our sins, and the reward of eternal life.

First, For the honour of God's holiness. For should God have received men to his favour, and rewarded them with eternal glory and happiness, for the meer belief of the Gospel, or a confident persuasion that Christ would save them without any change of their hearts and lives, without *repentance from dead works, and fruits meet for repentance, and amendment of life*; he had not given sufficient testimony to the world of his love to holiness and righteousness, and of his hatred

368 *Of the Nature of Regeneration, and its Necessity,*

SERM. LVI.  tred of sin and iniquity. The Apostle tells us, that God in the justification of a sinner *declares his righteousness*; but should he justify men upon others terms, this would not *declare his righteousness* and love of holiness, but rather an indifferency, whether men were good and righteous or not. For a bare assent to the truth of the Gospel, without the fruits of holiness and obedience is not a *living*, but a *dead faith*, and so far from being acceptable to God, that it is an affront to him; and a confident reliance upon Christ for salvation, while we continue in our sins, is not a justifying faith, but a bold and impudent presumption upon the mercy of god, and the merits of our Saviour; who indeed *justifies the ungodly*, that is, those that *have been* so, but not those that *continue* so. And if God should pardon sinners, and reward them with eternal life, upon any other terms than upon our becoming *new creatures*, than upon such a *faith* as is *made perfect by charity*, that is, by *keeping the commandments of God*; this would be so far from *declaring his righteousness*, and being a testimony of his hatred and displeasure against sin, that it would give the greatest countenance and encouragement to it imaginable.

Secondly, It is likewise very reasonable, that such a faith, that makes us *new creatures*, and is *perfected by charity*, and *keeping the commandments of God* should be the condition of justification, in order to the qualifying of us for the pardon of our sins, and the reward of eternal life; that is, for the favour of God, and for the enjoyment of him. To forgive men upon other terms, were to give countenance and encouragement to perpetual rebellion, and disobedience. That man is not fit to be forgiven, who is so far from being sorry for his fault, that he goes on to offend; he is utterly incapable of mercy, who is not sensible that he hath done amiss, and resolved to amend. No Prince ever thought a rebellious sub-
ject

ject capable of pardon upon lower terms than these. SERM.
It is in the nature of the thing unfit that an obstinate LVI.
offender should have any mercy or favour shewn 
to him.

And as without repentance and resolution of better obedience, we are unfit for forgiveness, so much more for areward; as we cannot expect God's favour, so we are incapable of the enjoyment of him without holiness. Holiness is the image of God, and makes us like to him; and till we be *like him*, we can't *see him*, we can have no enjoyment of him. All delightful communion and agreeable society is founded in a similitude of disposition and manners, and therefore so long as we are unlike to God in the temper and disposition of our minds, and in the actions and course of our lives, neither can God take pleasure in us, nor we in him, but there will be a perpetual jarring and discord between him and us; and tho' we were in heaven, and seated in the place of the blessed, yet we should not, nay we could not be happy; because we should want the necessary materials and ingredients of happiness. For it is with the soul in this respect, as it is with the body; tho' all things be easie without us, and no cruelty be exercis'd upon us, to to give torment and vexation to us, yet if we be inwardly diseased, we may have pain and anguish enough, we may be as it were upon the rack, and feel as great torment from the inward disorder of our humours, as if we were tortur'd from without. So it is with the soul; sin and vice are internal diseases, which do naturally create trouble and discontent, and nothing but diversion, and the variety of objects and pleasures which entertain men in this world, hinders a wicked man from being out of his wits, whenever he reflects upon himself; for all the irregular appetites and passions, lust, and malice, and revenge, are so many *furies* within us; and tho' there were no Devil to torment us, yet the disorder of our own minds, and the horrors of a guilty conscience

370 *Of the Nature of Regeneration, and its Necessity,*

SERM. would be a hell to us, and make us extreemly misfe-

LVI. rable in the very regions of happiness. So that it
 is necessary that our *faith* should be *made perfect by charity*, and that we should become *new creatures*; not only from the arbitrary constitution and appointment of God, but from the nature and reason of the thing; because nothing but this can dispose us for that blessedness, which God hath promis'd to us, and prepar'd for us. Faith consider'd abstractedly from the fruits of holiness and obedience, of goodness and charity, will bring no man into the favour of God. All the excellency of faith is, that it is the principle of a good life, and furnisheth us with the best motives and arguments thereto, the promises and threatenings of the Gospel; and therefore in heaven, when we come to *fight and enjoyment*, *faith* and *hope* shall cease, but *charity never faileth*; for if it should, heaven would cease to be heaven to us, because it is the very frame and temper of happiness; and if this disposition be not wrought in us in this world, we shall be altogether incapable of the felicity of the other.

You see then what it is that must recommend us to the favour of God; the real renovation of our hearts and lives, after the image of him that created us. This must be repaired in us, before ever we can hope to be restored to the grace and favour of God, or to be capable of the reward of eternal life. And what could God have done more reasonable, than to make these very things the terms of our salvation, which are the necessary causes and means of it? How could ~~he~~ we have dealt more mercifully and kindly with us, than to appoint *that* to be the condition of our happiness, which is the only qualification that can make us capable of it?

I will conclude all with that excellent passage in the wisdom of *Solomon*, Chap. vi. 17, 18. *The very true beginning of wisdom is the desire of discipline,*
and

in order to Justification and Salvation.

371

and the care of discipline is love, and love is the keeping of her laws, and taking heed to her laws is the assurance of incorruption. The sum of what I have said upon this argument amounts to this, that upon the terms of the Gospel we can have no hope of the forgiveness of our Sins, and eternal salvation, unless our nature be renewed, and the image of God, which is defaced by sin, be repaired in us, and we be *created in Christ unto good works*; That no faith will avail to our justification and acceptance with God, but that which is *made perfect by charity*, that is, by *fulfilling of the law, and keeping the commandments of God*; by sincere obedience and holiness of life, which notwithstanding the unavoidable imperfection of it in this state, will nevertheless be accepted with God, through the merits of our blessed Saviour, *who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.* To whom be glory for ever. Amen.

SERM.
LVI.

*The first
Sermon on
this Text.*

S E R M O N LVII.

The Danger of all known Sin, both
from the Light of Nature and Re-
velation.

ROM. i 18, 19.

*For the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven
against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of
men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; be-
cause that which may be known of God is
manifest in them, for God hath shewed it unto
them.*

SERM.
LVII.

IN the beginning of this Chapter, the Apostle declares that he was particularly designed and appointed by God to preach the Gospel to the world, and that he was not ashamed of his ministry, notwithstanding all the reproach and persecution it was attended withal, and notwithstanding the slight and undervaluing opinion which the world had of the doctrine which he preached, it being *to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness*; for tho' this might reflect some disparagement upon it in the esteem of sensual and carnal men, yet to those who weighed things impartially, and consider'd the excellent end and design of the christian doctrine, and the force and efficacy of it to that end, it will appear to be an instrument admirably fitted by the wisdom of God, for the reformation and salvation of mankind.

And therefore he tells us, *verse 16.* that how much soever it was despised by that ignorant and in-
considerate

considerate age, *he was not ashamed of the Gospel of* SERM.
Christ; because it is the power of God unto salvari- LVII.
on, to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and
also to the Greek; that is, the doctrine of the Gos-
pel sincerely believed and embraced, is a most pro-
per and powerful means, designed by God for the
salvation of mankind; not only of the Jews, but
also of the Gentiles.

The revelations which God had formerly made, were chiefly restrained to the Jewish nation; but this great and last revelation of the Gospel, was equally calculated for the benefit and advantage of all mankind. The Gospel indeed was first preached to the Jews, and from thence publish'd to the whole world; and as this doctrine was design'd for the general benefit of mankind, so it was very likely to be effectual to that end, being an instrument equally fitted for the salvation of the whole world, Gentiles as well as Jews; *it is the power of God to salvation to every one that believes, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*

And to shew the efficacy of it, he instanceth in two things, which render it so powerful and effectual a means for the salvation of mankind.

First, Because therein the grace and mercy of God, in the justification of a sinner, and declaring him righteous, is so clearly revealed, ver. 17. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed, from faith to faith, as it is written, the just shall live by faith. This is very obscurely exprest, but the meaning of this text will be very much cleared, by comparing it with another in the 3^d chapter of this epistle, ver. 20, 21, 22, &c. where the Apostle speaks more fully and expressly of the way of our justification by the faith of Jesus Christ, that is, by the belief of the Gospel. He asserts at the 20th verse, that *by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in the sight of God.* To this way of justification, *by the deeds of the law, he opposeth the righteousness of*

SERM. God by the faith of Jesus Christ, to all, and upon all
 LVII *them that believe*, which is the Gospel way of justification, vcr. 21, 22. *But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, which is by the faith of Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all them that believe. The righteousness of God without the law is manifested: that is, the way which God hath taken to justify sinners, and declare them righteous without the deeds of the law, that is, without observing the law of Moses, is manifested, that is, is clearly revealed in the Gospel, (which is the same with what the Apostle had said before, that the righteousness of God is revealed in the Gospel) being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, that is, the righteousness of God, or the justification of sinners by Jesus Christ, is clearly revealed in the Gospel, being also in a more obscure manner attested or foretold in the old Testament, which he calls the Law and the Prophets; and this fully explains that difficult phrase of the righteousness of God being revealed by the Gospel from faith to faith; that is by a gradual revelation, being more obscurely foretold in the old Testament, and clearly discovered in the new; so that these two passages are equivalent, In the Gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; and the righteousness of God without the works of the law is manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets. There is the first and more imperfect revelation of it, but the clear revelation of it is in the Gospel; this the Apostle calls a revelation from faith to faith, that is, from a more imperfect and obscure, to a more express and clear discovery and belief of it. And then the citation which follows is very pertinent, as it is written, The just shall live by faith; for this citation out of the old Testament plainly shews, that the way of justification by faith was there mentioned; or as our Apostle expresseth it, was*
witnessed

witnessed by the Law and the Prophets; and consequently that this was a gradual discovery, which he calls a revelation from faith to faith. *The just shall live by faith*, that is, good men shall be saved by their faith, shall be justified and esteemed righteous in the sight of God, and finally saved by their faith. And so the Apostle in the 5th Chapter of this epistle, ver. 18. calls our justification by the faith of the Gospel, *the justification of life*, in opposition to *condemnation and death*, which very well explains that saying of the Prophet, *the just shall live by faith*. I have been the longer upon this, that I might give some light to a very difficult and obscure text.

Secondly, The other instance whereby the Apostle proves the Gospel to be so powerful a means for the recovery and salvation of men is, that therein also the severity of God against impenitent sinners, as well as his grace and mercy in the justification of the penitent, is clearly revealed, ver. 18. *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; because that which may be known of God is manifested in them, for God hath shewn it unto them.* The first, viz. the grace of God in our justification and the remission of sins past, is a most proper and powerful argument to encourage us to obedience for the future; nothing being more likely to reclaim men to their duty, than the assurance of indemnity for past crimes; and the other is one of the most effectual considerations in the world to deter men from sin, that *the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, &c.*

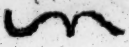
From which words I shall observe these six things.

First, The infinite danger that a wicked and sinful course doth plainly expose men to. *The wrath of God is here said to be revealed against the impiety and unrighteousness of men.*

A a 4

Secondly,

SERM.
LVII.

SERM. Secondly, The clear and undoubted revelation
 LVII. which the Gospel hath made of this danger. *The*
 *wrath of God* against the sins of men, is said to be
 revealed from heaven.

Thirdly, That every wicked and vicious practice doth expose men to this great danger. *The wrath of God* is said to be revealed against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men.

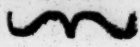
Fourthly, That it is a very great aggravation of sin, for men to offend against the light of their own minds. The Apostle here aggravates the impiety and wickedness of the heathen world, that they did not live up to the knowledge which they had of God, but contradicted it in their lives, which he calls *holding the truth in unrighteousness*.

Fifthly, The natural knowledge which men have of God, if they live wickedly, is a clear evidence of their *holding the truth in unrighteousness*. The Apostle therefore chargeth them with *holding the truth in unrighteousness*, because *that which may be known of God, is manifested in them, God having shewed it to them*.

Sixthly and lastly, That the clear revelation of the wrath of God in the Gospel, against the impiety and wickedness of men, renders it a very powerful and likely means for the recovery and salvation of men. For the Apostle proves *the Gospel of Christ* to be *the power of God to salvation*, because *therein the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness*; that is, against all impenitent sinners.

I shall at the present, by God's assistance, speak to the *three* first of these particulars.

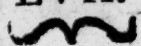
First, The infinite danger that a wicked and sinful course doth plainly expose men to. If there be a God that made the world, and governs it, and takes care of mankind, and hath given them laws and rules to live by, he cannot but be greatly displeased at the violation and transgression of them;
 and

and certainly the displeasure of God is the most SERM.
dreadful thing in the world, and the effects of it LVII.
the most insupportable. The greatest fear is from 
the greatest danger, and the greatest danger is from
the greatest power offended and enraged; and this
is a consideration exceeding full of terror, that by a
sinful course we expose our selves to the utmost dis-
pleasure of the great and terrible God; for *who*
knows the power of his wrath? and who may stand be-
fore him when once he is angry? According to thy fear,
so is thy wrath (saith the Psalmist) There is no
passion in the mind of man that is more boundless
and infinite than our *fear*, it is apt to make wild
and frightful representations of evils, and to ima-
gine them many times greater than really they are;
but in this case our imagination must fall short of
the truth and terror of the thing; for the wrath of
God doth far exceed the utmost jealousy and suspi-
cion of the most fearful and guilty conscience; and
the greatest sinner under his greatest anguish and
despair, cannot apprehend or fear it more than
there is reason for; *according to thy fear, so is thy*
wrath.

If it were only the wrath and displeasure of *men*
that the sinner were exposed to, there might be rea-
son enough for fear, because *they* have many times
power enough to crush an offender, and cruelty e-
nough to fret every vein of his body, and to tor-
ment him in every part: but the wrath and venge-
ance of *men* bears no comparison with the wrath of
God. Their passions are many times strong and bluf-
tering; but their arm is but short, and their power
small, *they have not an arm like God, nor can they*
thunder with a voice like him. They may design con-
siderable harm and mischief to us; but it is not al-
ways in the power of their hand to wreak their ma-
lice upon us, and to execute all the mischief which
their enraged minds may prompt them to; the very
utmost they can design, is to torment our bodies,
and

SERM. and to take away our lives, and when they have de-
 LVII. signed this, they may *die first, and return to their*
 ~~~~~ *dust, and then their thoughts perish with them,* and all  
 their malicious designs are at an end; they are al-  
 ways under the power and government of a superi-  
 or being, and can go no farther than he gives them  
 leave. However if they do their worst, and shoot  
 all their arrows at us, we cannot stand at the mark  
 long, their wrath will soon make an end of us, and  
 set us free from all their cruelty and oppression; *they*  
*can but kill the body, and after that they have no more*  
*that they can do;* their most refined malice cannot  
 reach our *spirits*, no weapon that can be formed by  
 the utmost art of man can pierce and wound our  
*souls;* they can drive us out of *this* world, but they  
 cannot pursue us into the *other;* so that at the worst  
 the grave will be a sanctuary to us, and death a safe  
 retreat from all their rage and fury.

But the wrath of God is not confined by any of  
 these limits. *Once hath God spoken* (saith David by  
 an elegant Hebrew phrase to express the certainty  
 of the thing) *once hath God spoken, and twice I have*  
*heard this, that power belongs to God,* Psal. lxii. 11.  
*He hath a mighty arm,* and when he pleaseth to  
 stretch it out, none may stay it, nor *say unto him,*  
*what dost thou;* he hath power enough to make  
 good all his threatnings, whatever he says he is  
 able to effect, and whatever he *purposeth* he can  
*bring to pass;* for *his counsel shall stand, and he will*  
*accomplish all his pleasure;* he need but speak the  
 word, and it is done; for we can neither resist his  
 power, nor fly from it; if we fly to the utmost  
 parts of the earth, his hand can reach us, for *in his*  
*hand are all the corners of the earth;* if we take re-  
 fuge in the grave (and we cannot do that without  
 his leave) thither his wrath can follow us; and  
 there it will overtake us; for his power is not con-  
 fined to *this* world, nor limited to our *bodies;* *after*  
*he hath kill'd, he can destroy both body and soul in hell.*  
 And

And this is that *wrath of God* which is revealed SERM.  
*from heaven*, and which the Apostle chiefly intends, LVII.  
*viz.* the misery and punishment of another world,   
 this God hath threaten'd sinners withal; to express  
 which to us, as fully as words can do, he heaps up  
 in the next chapter so many weighty and terrible  
 words, *indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish*  
*upon every soul of Man that doth evil*; in opposition to  
 that great and glorious reward of *immortality and*  
*eternal life*, which is promised to a *patient continu-*  
*ance in well doing.*

So that *the wrath of God* which is here denoun-  
 ced *against the impiety and unrighteousness of men*,  
 comprehends all the evils and miseries of this and  
 the other world, which every sinner is in danger of  
 whilst he continues impenitent; for as according to  
 the tenour of the Gospel, *godliness hath the promises*  
*of this life, and of that which is to come*, so impeni-  
 tency in sin exposeth men to the evils of both worlds,  
 to the judgments of *the life that now is*, and to the  
 endless and intolerable torments of *that which is to*  
*come.* And what can be more dreadful than the dis-  
 pleasure of an Almighty and Eternal Being? who  
 can punish to the utmost, and *who lives for ever*, to  
 execute his wrath and vengeance upon sinners; so  
 that well might the Apostle say, *it is a fearful thing*  
*to fall into the hands of the living God.*

Consider this all ye that forget God, that neglect  
 him, and live in continual disobedience to his holy  
 and righteous laws; much more those who despise  
 and affront him, and live in a perpetual defiance of  
 him. *Will ye provoke the Lord to jealousy? are ye*  
*stronger than he?* Think of it seriously, and forget  
 him if you can, despise him if you dare; consider  
 this, lest he take you into consideration, and rouse  
 like a Lion out of sleep, and *tear you in pieces, and*  
*there be none to deliver.* This is the first observation,  
 the infinite danger that a wicked and sinful course  
 doth expose men to, *the wrath of God*, which doth  
 not

SERM. not only signify more than all the evils that we  
 LVII. know, but than all those which the wildest fears  
 and suspicions of our minds can imagine.

*Secondly,* The next thing observable, is the clear and undoubted revelation which the Gospel has made of this danger, *the wrath of God is revealed,* &c. By which the Apostle intimates to us, that this was but obscurely known to the world before, at least in comparison of that clear discovery which the Gospel hath now made of it; so that I may allude to that expression in *Job*, which he applies to death and the grave, that *hell is naked before us, and destruction hath no covering.*

Not but that mankind had always apprehensions and jealousies of the danger of a wicked life, and sinners were always afraid of the vengeance of God pursuing their evil deeds, not only in this life, but after it too; and tho' they had turn'd the punishments of another world into ridiculous fables, yet the wiser sort of mankind could not get it out of their minds, that there was something real under them; and that *Ixion's* wheel, which by a perpetual motion carried him about; and *Sisyphus* his stone, which he was perpetually rolling up the hill, and when he had got it near the top tumbled down, and still created him a new labour; and *Tantalus* his continual hunger and thirst, aggravated by a perpetual nearness of enjoyment, and a perpetual disappointment; and *Prometheus* his being chained to a rock, with an eagle or vulture perpetually preying upon his Liver, which grew as fast as it was gnawed; I say, even the wiser among the heathens look'd upon these as fantastical representations of something that was real, *viz.* the grievous and endless punishment of sinners, the not to be endured, and yet perpetually renewed torments of another world; for in the midst of all the ignorance and degeneracy of the heathen world, mens consciences did accuse them when they did amiss, and they had  
 secret



secret fears and misgivings of some mighty danger hanging over them from the displeasure of a superior Being, and the apprehension of some great mischiefs likely to follow their wicked actions, which some time or other would overtake them; which because they did not always in this world, they dreaded them in the next. And this was the foundation of all those superstitions, whereby the ancient Pagans endeavoured so carefully to appease their offended deities, and to avert the calamities which they feared they would send down upon them. But all this while they had no certain assurance by any clear and express revelation from God to that purpose, but only the jealousies and suspicions of their own minds, naturally consequent upon those notions which men generally had of God, but so obscured and depraved by the lusts and vices of men, and by the gross and false conceptions which they had of God, that they only serv'd to make them superstitious, but were not clear and strong enough to make them wisely and seriously religious. And to speak the truth, the more known and inquisitive part of the heathen world had brought all these things into great doubts and uncertainty, by the nicety and subtilty of disputes about them; so that it was no great wonder, that these principles had no greater effect upon the lives of men, when their apprehensions of them were so dark and doubtful.

But the Gospel hath made a most clear and certain revelation of these things to mankind. It was written before upon mens hearts as the great sanction of the law of nature, but the impressions of this were in a great measure blurred and worn out, so that it had no great power and efficacy upon the minds and manners of men; but now it is clearly discovered to us, *the wrath of God is revealed from heaven*, which expression may well imply in it these *three* things.

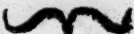
*First*, The clearness of the discovery; *the wrath of God is said to be revealed.*

SERM. Secondly, The extraordinary manner of it; it is  
LVII. said to be *revealed from heaven*.

~ Thirdly, The certainty of it; not being the result of subtle and doubtful reasonings, but having a divine testimony and confirmation given to it, which is the proper meaning of *being revealed from heaven*.

First, It imports the clearness of the discovery. The punishment of sinners in another world is not so obscure a matter as it was before; it is now expressly declared in the Gospel, together with the particular circumstances of it, namely, that there is another life after this, wherein men shall receive the just recompence of reward for all the actions done by them in this life; that there is a particular time appointed, wherein God will call all the world to a solemn account, and those who are in their graves shall by a powerful voice be raised to life, and those who shall then be found alive shall be suddenly changed; *when our Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal and only begotten Son of God, who once came in great humility to save us, shall come again in power, and great glory, attended with his mighty Angels; and all nations shall be gathered before him, and all mankind shall be separated into two companies, the righteous and the wicked, who after a full hearing, and fair tryal, shall be sentenced according to their actions, the one to eternal life and happiness, the other to everlasting misery and torment.*

So that the Gospel hath not only declared the thing to us, that there shall be a future judgment; but for our farther assurance and satisfaction in this matter, and that these things might make a deep impression, and strike a great awe upon our minds, God hath been pleased to reveal it to us with a great many particular circumstances, such as are very worthy of God, and apt to fill the minds of men with dread and astonishment, as often as they think of them.

For the circumstances of this judgment revealed to SERM.  
us in the Gospel, are very solemn and awful, not LVII.  
such as the wild fancies and imaginations of men   
would have been apt to have drest it up withal, such  
as are the fictions of the heathen Poets, and the ex-  
travagancies of *Mahomet*; which tho' they be terri-  
ble enough, yet they are withal ridiculous; but such  
as are every way becoming the Majesty of the great  
God, and the solemnity of the great day, and such  
as do not in the last favour of the vanity and light-  
ness of human imagination.

For what more fair and equal, than that men  
should be tried by a *man* like themselves, one of the  
same rank and condition, that had experience of the  
infirmities and temptations of human nature? So our  
Lord tells us, that *the Father hath committed all judg-  
ment to the Son, because he is the son of man*, and  
therefore cannot be excepted against, as not being a  
fit and equal judge. And this *St. Paul* offers as a clear  
proof of the equitable proceedings of that day; *God*  
(says he) *hath appointed a day, in which he will judge*  
*the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath*  
*ordained.*

And then what more congruous than that the Son  
of God, who had taken so much pains for the salva-  
tion of men, and came into the world for that pur-  
pose, and had used all imaginable means for the refor-  
mation of mankind; I say what more congruous, than  
that this very person should be honoured by God to  
sit in judgment upon the world, and to condemn  
those, who after all the means that had been tried for  
their recovery, would not repent and be saved. And  
what more proper, than that men, who are to be  
judged for *things done in the body*, should be judged  
*in the body*, and consequently that the resurrection  
of the dead should precede the general judgment.

And what more magnificent and suitable to this  
glorious solemnity, than the awful circumstances  
which the scripture mentions of the appearance of this  
great



SERM. great judge; that he shall *descend from heaven* in great  
 LVII. majesty and glory, attended with *his mighty Angels*,  
 and that *every eye shall see him*; that upon his appearance, the frame of nature shall be in agony, and the whole world in *flame and confusion*; that those great and glorious bodies of light shall be obscured, and by degrees extinguish'd; *the sun shall be darken'd, and the moon turned into blood, and all the powers of heaven shaken*; yea, *the heavens themselves shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements dissolve with fervent heat*; *the earth also, and all the works that are therein shall be burnt up*. I appeal to any man, whether this be not a representation of things very proper and suitable to *that great day*, wherein he who made the world shall come to judge it? and whether the wit of man ever devised any thing so awful, and so agreeable to the majesty of God, and the solemn judgment of the whole world? The description which *Virgil* makes of the judgment of another world, of *the Elisian fields*, and *the infernal regions*, how infinitely do they fall short of the majesty of the holy Scripture, and the description there made of *heaven and hell*, and of *the great and terrible day of the Lord*! so that in comparison they are childish and trifling; and yet perhaps he had the most regular and most govern'd imagination of any man that ever lived, and observed the greatest decorum in his characters and descriptions. But who can declare *the great things of God*, but *he to whom God shall reveal them*!

Secondly, This expression of *the wrath of God* being *revealed from heaven*, doth not only imply the clear discovery of the thing, but likewise something extraordinary in the manner of the discovery. It is not only a natural impression upon the minds of men, that God will severely punish sinners; but he hath taken care that mankind should be instructed in this matter in a very particular and extraordinary manner.

ner. He hath not left it to the reason of men to SERM. collect it from the consideration of his attributes and LVII. perfections, his holiness and justice, and from the consideration of the promiscuous administration of his providence towards good and bad men in this world; but he hath been pleased to send an extraordinary person from heaven, on purpose to declare this thing plainly to the world: *the wrath of God is revealed from heaven*; that is, God sent his own Son from heaven, on purpose to declare his wrath against all obstinate and impenitent sinners, that he might effectually awaken the drowsy world to repentance; he hath sent an extraordinary ambassador into the world, to give warning to all those who continue in their sins, of the judgment of the great day, and to summon them before his dreadful tribunal. So the Apostle tells the *Athenians*, Acts xvii. 30, 31. *Now he commandeth all men every where to repent; because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.*

*Thirdly*, This expression implies likewise the certainty of this discovery. If the wrath of God had only been declared in the discourses of wise men, tho' grounded upon very probable reason, yet it might have been brought into doubt by the contrary reasonings of subtle and disputing men: But to put the matter out of all question, we have a divine testimony for it, and God hath confirmed it from heaven, by signs, and wonders, and miracles, especially by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; for *by this he hath given assurance unto all men, that it is he who is ordained of God to judge the quick and dead.*

Thus you see in what respect *the wrath of God* is said to be *revealed from heaven*, in that the Gospel hath made a more clear, and particular, and certain

SERM. discovery of the judgment of the great day, than  
LVIII. ever was made to the world before. I proceed  
to the

*Third* observation, which I shall speak but briefly to; namely, that every wicked and vicious practice doth expose men to this dreadful danger. The Apostle instanceth in the two chief heads to which the sins of men may be reduced, *impiety* towards God, and *unrighteousness* towards men; and therefore he is to be understood to denounce *the wrath of God* against every particular kind of sin, comprehended under these general heads; so that no man that allows himself in any impiety and wickedness of life can hope to escape the wrath of God. Therefore it concerns us to be entirely religious, and *to have respect to all God's commandments*; and to take heed that we do not allow ourselves in the practice of any kind of sin whatsoever, because the living in any one known sin is enough to expose us to the dreadful wrath of God. Though a man be just and righteous in his dealings with men, yet if he neglect the worship and service of God, this will certainly bring him under condemnation; and on the other hand, though a man may serve God never so diligently and devoutly, yet if he be defective in righteousness toward men, if he deal falsely and fraudulently with his neighbour, he shall not escape the wrath of God; tho' a man pretend to never so much piety and devotion, yet if he be *unrighteous, he shall not inherit the kingdom of God*; if any man *over-reach and defraud his brother in any matter, the Lord is the avenger of such*, saith St. Paul, *1 Theff. iv. 6.*

So that here is a very powerful argument to take men off from all sin, and to engage them to a constant and careful discharge of their whole duty toward God and men, and to reform whatever is amiss either in the frame and temper of their minds, or in the actions and course of their lives; because  
any



any kind of wickedness, any one sort of vicious course, lays men open to the vengeance of God, and the punishments of another world; *the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men*; there is no exception in the case, we must forsake all sin, subdue every lust, *be holy in all manner of conversation*, otherwise we can have no reasonable hopes of escaping *the wrath of God*, and the damnation of hell. But to proceed to the

*Fourth* observation; namely, that it is a very great aggravation of sin, for men to offend against the light of their own minds. The Apostle here aggravates the wickedness of the heathen world, that they did not live up to that knowledge which they had of God, but contradicted it in their lives, *holding the truth of God in unrighteousness*. And that he speaks here of the heathen, is plain from his following discourse, and the character he gives of those persons of whom he was speaking, *who hold the truth of God in unrighteousness; because that which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God hath shewn it unto them*; and this he proves, because those who were destitute of divine revelation, were not without all knowledge of God, being led by the sight of this visible world, to the knowledge of an invisible Being and Power that was the author of it, *ver. xx. 21. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things which are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse; because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God. (Hæc est summa delicti, nolle agnoscere, quem ignorare non possis, saith Tertullian to the heathen; "This is the height of thy fault, not to acknowledge him, whom thou canst not but know, not to own him, of whom thou canst not be ignorant if thou wouldst;)* *neither were thankful;*  
B b 2
they

SERM.  
LVII.

SERM. they did not pay those acknowledgments to him  
 LVII. which of right were due to the Author of their  
 Being, and of all good things; but became vain in  
 their imaginations; *ἐματαιώθησαν ἐν τοῖς διαλογισμοῖς αὐτῶν*, they  
 were fool'd with their own reasonings. This  
 he speaks of the *Philosophers* who in those great  
 arguments of the *Being* and *Providence* of God, the  
*immortality of the soul*, and the *rewards of another*  
*world*, had lost the truth by too much subtilty a-  
 bout it, and had disputed themselves into doubt  
 and uncertainty about those things which were  
 naturally known; for *nimum altercando veritas a-*  
*mittitur*; "Truth is many times lost by too much  
 " contention and dispute about it, and by too ea-  
 " ger a pursuit of it, men many times outrun it,  
 " and leave it behind; ver. 22. and professing them-  
 selves to be wise, they became fools. Men never  
 play the fools more, than by endeavouring to be  
 over-subtle and wise; ver. 23. and changed the glory  
 of the incorruptible God, into an Image made like to  
 corruptible man, and to birds, and to four-footed  
 beasts, and creeping things; here he speaks of the  
 sottishness of their idolatry, whereby they pro-  
 voked God to give them up to all manner of lewd-  
 ness and impurity, ver. 24. wherefore God also gave  
 them up unto uncleanness, through the lusts of their  
 own hearts; and again, ver. 26. for this cause God  
 gave them up to vile affections; and then he enu-  
 merates the abominable lusts and vices they were  
 guilty of, notwithstanding their natural acknow-  
 ledgment of the divine Justice, ver. 32. who  
 knowing the judgment of God, that they which com-  
 mit such things are worthy of death, not only do the  
 same, but have pleasure in them that do them. By  
 all which it appears that he speaks of the Hea-  
 then, who offended against the natural light of  
 their own minds, and therefore were without ex-  
 cuse. *Quam sibi veniam sperare possunt impietatis*  
*sue, qui non agnoscunt cultum ejus, quem prorsus ig-*  
*norant*

*norari ab hominibus fas non est?* saith *Lactantius*, SERM. LVII.  
 “How can they hope for pardon of their impiety, who deny to worship that God of whom it is not possible mankind should be wholly ignorant?”

So that this is *To hold the truth in unrighteousness*, injuriously to suppress it, and to hinder the power and efficacy of it upon our minds and actions; for so the word *κατέχειν* sometimes signifies, as well as *to hold fast*; and this every man does, who acts contrary to what he believes and knows; he offers violence to the light of his own mind, and does injury to the truth, and keeps that a prisoner, which would set him free; *ye shall know the truth* (says our Lord) *and the truth shall make you free.*

And this is one of the highest aggravations of the sins of men, to offend against knowledge, and that light which God hath set up in every man's mind. If men wander and stumble in the dark, it is not to be wonder'd at; many times it is unavoidable, and no care can prevent it: but in the light it is expected men should look before them, and discern their way. That natural light which the Heathen had, tho' it was but comparatively dim and imperfect, yet the Apostle takes notice of it as a great aggravation of their idolatrous and abominable practices. Those natural notions which all men have of God, if they had in any measure attended to them, and govern'd themselves by them, might have been sufficient to have preserved them from dishonouring the Deity, by *worshipping creatures instead of God*; the common light of nature was enough to have discover'd to them the evil of those lewd and unnatural practices, which many of them were guilty of; but they *detained and suppress'd the truth* most injuriously, and would not suffer it to have its natural and proper influence upon them; and this is that which left them *without excuse*, that from the light of nature they had



SERM. had knowledge enough to have done better, and  
 LVII. to have preserved them from those great crimes  
 which were so common among them.

And if this was so great an aggravation of the impiety and wickedness of the Heathen, and left them *without excuse*, what apology can be made for the impiety and unrighteousness of Christians who have so strong and clear a light to discover to them their duty, and the danger of neglecting it to whom *the wrath of God is plainly revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*? The truths of the Gospel are so very clear and powerful, and such an improvement of natural light, that men must use great force and violence to suppress them, and to hinder the efficacy of them upon their lives. And this is a certain rule, by how much the greater our knowledge, by so much the less is our excuse, and so much the greater punishment is due to our faults. So our Lord hath told us, *Luke xii. 47. That servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes.* And *John ix. 41. If ye were blind* (says our Saviour to the Jews) *ye should have no sin.* So much ignorance as there is of our duty, so much abatement of the willfulness of our faults; but *if we sin wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sin, but a fearful expectation of judgment and fiery Indignation*, says the Apostle to the Hebrews, *Chap. x. 26, 27. If we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth*; implying that men cannot pretend ignorance for their faults, after so clear a revelation of the will of God, as is made to mankind by the Gospel.

And upon this consideration it is, that our Saviour doth so aggravate the impenitency and unbelief of the Jews, because it was in opposition to all the advantages of knowledge, which can be  
 imagined

imagined to be afforded to mankind, *John xv. 22,* SERM. 23, 24. *If I had not come and spoken unto them, LVII. they had not had sin; that is, in comparison their sin had been much more excusable; but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hateth me, hateth my father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen, and hated both me and my father. How is that? Our Saviour means, that they had now sinned against all the advantages of knowing the will of God, that mankind could possibly have: at once opposing natural light, which was the dispensation of the Father; and the clearest revelation of God's will, in the dispensation of the Gospel by his Son; now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father.*

The two remaining observations I shall reserve to another opportunity.

The Second  
Sermon on  
this Text.

# SERMON LVIII.

The Danger of all known Sin, both  
from the Light of Nature and Re-  
velation.

---

R O M. i. 18, 19.

*For the Wrath of God is revealed from Heaven  
against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of  
men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; be-  
cause that which may be known of God, is ma-  
nifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto  
them.*

SERM.  
LVIII.

**I** Have handled *four* of the observations which  
I rais'd from these words; and shall now pro-  
ceed to the other *two* that remain.

The *Fifth* observation was, that the natu-  
ral knowledge which men have of God, if they  
live contrary to it, is a sufficient evidence of *their  
holding the truth of God in unrighteousness*. For  
the reason why the Apostle chargeth them with  
this, is, *because that which may be known of God  
is manifest, in that God hath shewed it unto them*.

There is a natural knowledge of God, and of  
the duty we owe to him, which the Apostle calls  
*τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ*, *that of God which is obvious to be  
known* by the light of nature, and is as much as is  
absolutely necessary for us to know. There is  
something of God that is incomprehensible, and  
beyond the reach of our understandings; but his  
*Being and essential perfections* may be known, which  
he



he calls, his *eternal power and Godhead*; these he SERM. tells us *are clearly seen, being understood by the things* LVIII. *which are made*, that is, the creation of the world is a plain demonstration to men, of the *Being and Power* of God; and if so, then *God is naturally known to men*; the contrary whereof *Soci-nus* positively maintains, tho' therein he be forsaken by most of his followers; an opinion in my judgment, very unworthy of one, who not without reason, was esteemed so great a master of reason; and (tho' I believe he did not see it) undermining the strongest and surest foundation of all religion, which when the natural notions of God are once taken away, will certainly want its best support. Besides that by denying any natural knowledge of God, and his essential perfections, he freely gives away one of the most plausible grounds of opposing the doctrine of the Trinity. But because this is a matter of great consequence, and he was a great man, and is not to be confuted by contempt, but by better reason, if it can be found; I will consider his reasons for this opinion, and return a particular answer to them.

*First*, He says that if the knowledge of God were natural, it would not be *of faith*; but the Apostle says, that *we must believe that he is*. The Force of which argument, if it have any, lies in this, that the object of faith is divine revelation, and therefore we cannot be said to *believe* what we *naturally know*. The schoolmen indeed say so; but the scripture useth the word *faith* more largely, for a *real persuasion* of any thing, whether grounded upon sense, or reason, or divine revelation. And our Saviour's speech to *Thomas*, *Because thou hast seen, thou hast believed*, does sufficiently intimate, that a man may *believe* what he *sees*; and if so, what should hinder, but that a man may be said to *believe* what he *naturally knows*; that is, be really persuaded that there is a God from *natural light*?

*Secondly*,

SERM.

LVIII.



*Secondly*, His next argument is, because the same Apostle concludes *Enoch* to have believed God, because he pleased God, *and without faith it is impossible to please him*: From whence he says it is certain that men may be without this belief, which if it be *natural* they cannot. Indeed if the Apostle had said, that whoever believes a God, must of necessity obey and please him, then the inference had been good, that all men do not naturally believe a God, because it is certain they do not please him: but it is not good the other way, no more than if a man should argue thus, that because whoever acts reasonably, must be endowed with reason, therefore men are not naturally endowed with reason. For as men may naturally be endowed with reason, and yet not always make use of it; so men may naturally know and believe a God, and yet not be careful to please him.

His *third* argument is, that the Scripture says that there are some that do not believe a God, for which he cites that of *David*, *The fool hath said in his heart there is no God*; which certainly proves, that bad men live so, as if they believed there were no God; nay, it may farther import, that they endeavour as much as they can, to stifle and extinguish the belief of a God in their minds, and would gladly persuade themselves there is no God, because it is convenient for them there should be none; and whether *David* meant so or not, it is very probable that some may arrive to that height of impiety, as for a time at least, and in some moods, to disbelieve a God, and to be very confident of the arguments on that side. But what then? Is the knowledge and belief of a God therefore not natural to mankind? Nature it self, as constant and uniform as it is, admits of some irregularities and exceptions, in effects that are merely natural, much more in those which have something in them that is voluntary, and depends upon the good or bad use of our reason and understanding;

standing; and there is no arguing from what is *monstrous*, against what is *natural*. It is natural for men to have five fingers upon a hand, and yet some are born otherwise: but in voluntary agents, that which is natural may be perverted, and in a great measure extinguish'd in some particular instances; so that there is no force at all in this objection.

His *fourth* and last argument is, that there have not only been particular persons, but whole nations who have had no sense, nor so much as suspicion of a Deity. This I confess were of great force, if it were true; and for the proof of this, he produceth the instance of *Brasil* in *America*. But I utterly deny the matter of fact and history, and challenge any man to bring good testimony, not only of any nation, but of any city in the world, that ever were *professed Atheists*.

I know this was affirmed of some part of *Brasil*, by some of the first discoverers, who yet at the same time owned, that these very people did most expressly believe the immortality of the soul, and the rewards and punishments of another life; opinions which no man can well reconcile with the denial and disbelief of a Deity. But to put an end to this argument, later and more perfect discoveries have found this not to be true, and do assure us upon better acquaintance with those barbarous people, that they are deeply possess'd with the belief of *one supreme God, who made and governs the world*.

Having thus given a particular answer to *Socinus* his arguments against the natural knowledge of a God, I will now briefly offer some arguments for it. And to prove that the knowledge and belief of a God is natural to mankind, my

*First* argument shall be from the universal consent, in this matter, of all nations in all ages. And this is an argument of great force, there being no better way to prove any thing to be natural to any kind of being, than if it be generally found in the whole

SERM.  
LVIII.  




SERM. whole kind. *Omnium consensus naturæ vox est*, "the  
 LVIII. "consent of all is the voice of nature, saith Tully."

And indeed by what other argument can we prove that reason, and speech, and an inclination to society are natural to men; but that these belong to the whole kind?

*Secondly*, Unless the knowledge of God and his essential perfections be natural, I do not see what sufficient and certain foundation there can be of revealed religion. For unless we naturally know God to be a Being of all perfection, and consequently that whatever he says is true, I cannot see what divine revelation can signify. For God's revealing or declaring such a thing to us, is no necessary argument that it is so, unless antecedently to this revelation we be possess'd firmly with this principle, that whatever God says is true. And whatever is known antecedently to revelation, must be known by natural light, and by reasonings and deductions from natural principles. I might farther add to this argument, that the only standard and measure to judge of divine revelations, and to distinguish between what are true, and what are counterfeit, are the natural notions which men have of God, and of his essential perfections.

*Thirdly*, If the notion of a God be not natural, I do not see how men can have any natural notion of the difference of moral good and evil, just and unjust. For if I do not naturally know there is a God, how can I naturally know that there is any law obliging to the one, and forbidding the other? All law and obligation to obedience, necessary supposing the authority of a superior Being. But the Apostle expressly asserts, that *the Gentiles* who were destitute of a revealed law, *were a law unto themselves*; but there cannot be a natural law obliging mankind, unless God be naturally known to them.

And this *Socinus* himself in his discourse upon this very argument is forced to acknowledge. "In all

"men

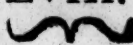
“ men (says he) there is naturally a difference of SERM  
 “ just and unjust, or at least there is planted in all LVIII.  
 “ men an acknowledgment that just ought to be  
 “ prefer’d before unjust, and that which is honest,  
 “ before the contrary; and this is nothing else but  
 “ the word of God within a man, which whoso-  
 “ ever obeys, in so doing obeys God, tho’ other-  
 “ wise he neither know nor think there is a God;  
 “ and there is no doubt but he that thus obeys God,  
 “ is accepted of him.” So that here is an acknow-  
 ledgment of a natural obligation to a law, with-  
 out any natural knowledge of a superior authority;  
 which I think cannot be; and which is worse, that  
 a man may obey God acceptably, without know-  
 ing and believing there is a God; which directly  
 thwarts the ground of his first argument, from  
 those words of the Apostle, *without faith it is im-  
 possible to please God; for he that cometh to God, that*  
*is, he that will be religious and please God, must*  
*believe that he is:* so hard is it for any man to con-  
 tradict nature, without contradicting himself.

*Fourthly,* My last argument I ground upon the  
 words of the Apostle in my text, *that which may*  
*be known of God, is manifested in them; for God hath*  
*shewed it unto them. Is manifest in them,* ἐν αὐτοῖς *a-*  
*mong them.* God hath sufficiently manifested it to  
 mankind. And which way hath God done this?  
 by revelation? or by the natural light of reason?  
 He tells us at the 20th verse, *For the invisible things*  
*of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen,*  
 that is, God, who in himself is invisible, ever since  
 he hath created the world, hath given a visible de-  
 monstration of himself, that is, of *his eternal power*  
*and Godhead, being understood by the things which are*  
*made.* The plain sense of the whole is, that this  
 wise and wonderful frame of the world, which  
 cannot reasonably be ascribed to any other cause but  
 God, is a sensible demonstration to all mankind, of  
 an eternal and powerful Being that was the author  
 and

SERM. and framer of it. The only question now is, whe-  
 LVIII. ther this text speaks of the knowledge of God by  
 particular revelation, or by natural light and reason,  
 from the contemplation of the works of God? *Soci-*  
*mus* having no other way to avoid the force of this  
 text, will needs understand it of the knowledge of  
 God by the revelation of the Gospel. His words are  
 these: "The Apostle therefore says in this place,  
 " that the eternal Godhead of God, that is, that  
 " which God would always have us to do (for *the*  
 " *Godhead* is sometimes taken in this sense) and his  
 " eternal power, that is, his promise which never  
 " fails, (in which sense he said a little before that the  
 " Gospel is the power of God) these, I say, were  
 " never seen by men, that is, were never known to  
 " them since the creation of the world, are known  
 " by his works, that is, by the wonderful operation  
 " of God, and divine men, especially of Christ and  
 " his Apostles." These are his very words, and  
 now I refer it to any indifferent judgment, whether  
 this be not a very forced and constrained interpreta-  
 tion of this text; and whether that which I have be-  
 fore given, be not infinitely more free and natural,  
 and every way more agreeable to the obvious sense of  
 the words, and the scope of the Apostle's argument.  
 For he plainly speaks of the *beathen*, and proves them  
 to be *inexcusable*, because *they held the truth in un-*  
*righteousness*, and having a natural knowledge of God,  
 from the contemplation of his works, and the things  
 which are made, *they did not glorify him as God.*  
 And therefore I shall not trouble myself to give any  
 other answer to it; for by the absurd violence of it  
 in every part, it confutes itself more effectually than  
 any discourse about it can do.

I have been the larger upon this, because it is a  
 matter of so great consequence, and lies at the bot-  
 tom of all religion. For the natural knowledge  
 which men have of God, is, when all is done, the  
 surest and fastest hold that religion hath on human  
 nature.

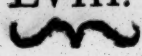


nature. Besides, how should God judge that part SERM. LVIII.  
of the world who are wholly destitute of divine re-  
velation, if they had no natural knowledge of him,   
and consequently could not be under the direction  
and government of any law? For *where there is no  
law, there is no transgression*; and where men are  
guilty of the breach of no law, they cannot be  
judged and condemned for it; for *the judgment of  
God is according to truth*.

And now this being establish'd, that men have a  
natural knowledge of God; if they contradict it by  
their life and practice, they are guilty of *retaining  
the truth of God in unrighteousness*. For by this ar-  
gument the apostle proves the *heathen* to be guilty  
of *holding the truth in unrighteousness*, because notwith-  
standing the natural knowledge which they had of  
God *by the things which are made*, they lived in  
the practice of gross idolatry, and the most abomi-  
nable sins and vices.

And this concerns us much more, who have the  
glorious light of the Gospel added to the light of  
nature. For if they who offended against the light  
of nature, were liable to the judgment of God, of  
how much sorer punishment shall we be thought  
worthy, if we neglect those infinite advantages  
which the revelation of the Gospel hath superadded  
to natural light? He hath now set our duty in the  
clearest and strongest light that ever was afforded  
to mankind, so that if we will not now believe and  
repent, there is no remedy for us, but we must *die in  
our sins*; *if we sin wilfully, after so much knowledge  
of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sin*;  
*but a fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indigna-  
tion to consume us*.

The sum of what hath been said on this argu-  
ment is briefly this; that men have a natural know-  
ledge of God, and of those great duties which re-  
sult from the knowledge of him; so that whatever  
men say and pretend, as to the main things of reli-  
gion,

SERM. *gion, the worship of God, and justice and righteousness*  
 LVIII. *towards men, setting aside divine revelation, we are*  
 all naturally convinc'd of our duty, and of what we ought to do, and those who live in a bad course, need only be put in mind of what they naturally know, better than any body else can tell them, that they are in a bad course: so that I may appeal to all wicked men, from *themselves*, rash and heated, and intoxicated with pleasure and vanity, transported and hurried away by lust and passion; to *themselves*, serious and composed, and in a cool and considerate temper. And can any sober man forbear to follow the convictions of his own mind, and to resolve to do what he inwardly consents to as best? Let us but be true to ourselves, and obey the dictates of our own minds, and give leave to our own conscience to counsel us and tell us what we ought to do, and we shall be *a law to ourselves*. I proceed to the

*Sixth* and last observation, namely, that the clear revelation of the wrath of God in the Gospel, against the impiety and unrighteousness of men, is one principal thing, which renders it so very powerful and likely a means for the salvation of mankind. For the Apostle instanceth in *two* things, which give the Gospel so great an advantage to this purpose, the *mercy* of God to penitent sinners, and his *severity* towards the impenitent; both which are so fully and clearly revealed in the Gospel. *The Gospel is the power of God to salvation, to every one that believeth, because therein the righteousness of God is revealed*; that is, his great grace and mercy in the justification and pardon of sinners by Jesus Christ, which I have already shewn to be meant by *the righteousness of God*, by comparing this with the explication which is given of *the righteousness of God* Chap. iii. ver. 22.

The other reason which he gives of the Gospel's being *the power of God to salvation*, is the plain declaration

claration of the severity of God toward impenitent sinners, *because therein also the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.* The force of which argument will appear, if we consider these following particulars. SERM. LVIII.

*First,* That the declarations of the Gospel in this matter are so plain and express.

*Secondly,* That they are very dreadful and terrible.

*Thirdly,* That there is no safety or hope of impunity for men that go on and continue in their sins.

*Fourthly,* That this argument will take hold of the most desperate and profligate sinners, and still retain its force upon the minds of men, when all other considerations fail, and are of little or no efficacy. And,

*Fifthly,* That no religion in the world can urge this argument with that force and advantage that Christianity does.

*First,* That the declarations of the Gospel in this matter are most plain and express; and that not only against sin and wickedness in general, but against particular sins and vices; so that no man that lives in any evil and vicious course, can be ignorant of his danger. Our Lord hath told us in general, what shall be the doom of the workers of iniquity, yea, tho' they may have owned him, and made profession of his name: Matt. vii. 21. *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, &c. then will I profess unto them, I never knew you, depart from me ye that work iniquity.* Matt. xiii. 49, 50. *So shall it be at the end of the world, the Angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.* Mat. xxv. 46. *The wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.* John v. 28, 29. *The hour is coming, in which all that are*



SERM. *in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth;*  
 LVIII. *they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life,*  
 and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of  
 damnation. Rom. ii. 6. St. Paul tells us that there  
 is a day of wrath, and of the revelation of the righteous  
 judgment of God, who will render to every man accord-  
 ing to his deeds; to them who obey not the truth, but  
 obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation  
 and anguish upon every soul of man that doth evil. Theff.  
 i. 7, 8, 9. that the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from  
 heaven, with his mighty Angels in flaming fire, taking  
 vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not  
 the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be pu-  
 nish'd with everlasting destruction from the presence of  
 the Lord, and from the glory of his power. Nothing  
 can be more plain and express than these general de-  
 clarations of the wrath of God against sinners; that  
 there is a day of judgment appointed, and a judge  
 constituted to take cognizance of the actions of men,  
 to pass a severe sentence, and to inflict a terrible pu-  
 nishment upon the workers of iniquity.

More particularly our Lord and his Apostles  
 have denounced the wrath of God against particular  
 sins and vices. In several places of the New Testa-  
 ment, there are catalogues given of particular sins,  
 the practice whereof will certainly shut men out of  
 the kingdom of heaven, and expose them to the  
 wrath and vengeance of God. 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.  
*Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the*  
*kingdom of God? Be not deceived, neither fornicators,*  
*nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abu-*  
*sers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor co-*  
*vetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners,*  
*shall inherit the kingdom of God. So likewise, Gal. v.*  
*19, 20, 21. The works of the flesh are manifest, which*  
*are these, adultery, fornication, witchcraft, hatred,*  
*variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, here-*  
*sies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and*  
*such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have*  
 also

also told you in times past, that they that do such things **SERM.**  
shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Col. iii, 5. 6. **LVIII.**

Mortify therefore your members upon earth, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry, for which things sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience. Rev. xxi. 8. *The fearful and unbelieving, (that is, those who rejected the Christian religion, notwithstanding the clear evidence that was offer'd for it, and those who out of fear should apostatize from it) the fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable, (that is, those who are guilty of unnatural lusts, not fit to be named) and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all lyars (that is, all sorts of false and deceitful and perfidious persons) shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.*

And not only these gross and notorious sins, which are such plain violations of the law and light of nature; but those wherein mankind have been apt to take more liberty, as if they were not sufficiently convinced of the evil of them; as *the resisting of civil authority*, which the Apostle tells us, they that are guilty of, *shall receive to themselves damnation*, Rom. xiii. 2. *Prophane swearing in common conversation*, which St. James tells us brings men under the danger of damnation, ch. v. 12. *Above all things, my brethren, swear not, lest ye fall under condemnation.* Nay, our Saviour hath told us plainly, that not only for wicked actions, but for every evil and sinful word, men are obnoxious to the judgment of God. So our Lord assures us, Mat. xii. 36, 37. *I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give an account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.* He had spoken before of that great and unpardonable sin of *blaspheming the Holy Ghost*; and because this might be thought great severity for evil words, he declares the reason more fully, because words shew the mind and temper of the man, ver. 34. *For out of the abundance*



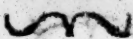
SERM. of the heart the mouth speaketh. “The character of  
 LVIII. “the man is shewn by his words, saith *Menander*.  
 ~~~~~ *Profert enim mores plerumque oratio* (saith *Quintilian*)  
& animi secreta detegit; “A man’s speech discovers his
 “manners, and the secrets of his heart; *ut vivit*
etiam quemque dicere, Men commonly speak as they
 live; and therefore our Saviour adds, *A good man*
out of the good treasure of his heart, bringeth forth good
things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his
heart bringeth forth evil things: but I say unto you, that
every idle word, *πᾶν ῥῆμα ἄργον*, by which I do not think
 our Saviour means, that men shall be called to a
 solemn account at the day of judgment, for *every*
trifling, and impatient, and unprofitable word, but
every wicked and sinful word of any kind: as if he had
 said, Do you think this severe, to make words an
 unpardonable fault? I say unto you, that men shall
 not only be condemned for their *malicious* and *blas-*
phemous speeches against the Holy Ghost; but they
 shall likewise give a strict account for all other *wicked*
and sinful speeches in any kind, tho’ much inferior to
 this. And this is not only most agreeable to the scope
 of our Saviour, but is confirmed by some Greek co-
 pies, in which it is *πᾶν ῥῆμα πονηρὸν*, *every wicked word*
which men shall speak, they shall be accountable for it at
the day of judgment. But this by the bye.

Our Saviour likewise tells us, that men shall not
 only be proceeded against for sins of *commission*, but
 for the bare *omission* and *neglect* of their duty, espe-
 cially in works of mercy and charity; for *not feeding*
the hungry, and the like, as we see, *Mat. xxv.* and
 that for the omission of these, he will pass that ter-
 rible sentence, *Depart ye cursed, &c.* So that it near-
 ly concerns us to be careful of our whole life, of all
 our words and actions, since the Gospel hath so plain-
 ly and expressly declared, that *for all these things God*
will bring us into judgment. And if the threatnings
 of the Gospel be true, *what manner of persons ought*
we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness?

Secondly,

Secondly, As the threatenings of the Gospel are SERM. very plain and express, so are they likewise very LVIII. dreadful and terrible. I want words to express the least part of the terror of them; and yet the expressions of Scripture concerning the misery and punishment of sinners in another world, are such as may justly raise amazement and horror in those that hear them. Sometimes it is express'd by *a departing from God*, and a perpetual banishment *from his presence*, who is the foundation of all comfort, and joy, and happiness; sometimes by *the loss of our souls*, or *ourselves*. *What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?* or, (as it is in another evangelist) *to lose himself?* Not that our being shall be destroyed; that would be a happy loss indeed, to him that is sentenced to be for ever miserable; but the man shall still remain, and his body and soul continue to be the foundation of his misery, and a scene of perpetual woe and discontent, which our Saviour calls *the destroying of body and soul in hell*, or *going into everlasting punishment, where there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth, where the worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched*. Could I represent to you the horror of that dismal prison, into which wicked and impure souls are to be thrust, and the misery they must there endure, without the least spark of comfort, or glimmering of hope, how they wail and groan under the intolerable wrath of God, the insolent scorn and cruelty of Devils, the severe lashes and stings, the raging anguish and horrible despair of their own minds, without intermission, without pity, without hope of ever seeing an end of that misery, which yet is insupportable for one moment; could I represent these things to you according to the terror of them, what effect must they have upon us? and with what patience could any man bear to think of plunging himself into this misery? and by his own wilful fault and folly to endanger his *coming into this*

SERM. *place and state of torments?* especially if we consider
LVIII. in the

 *Third place, that the Gospel hath likewise declared, that there is no avoiding of this misery, no hopes of impunity, if men go on and continue in their sins. The terms of the gospel in this are peremptory, that except we repent, we shall perish; that without holiness no man shall see the Lord; that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God. And this is a very pressing consideration, and brings the matter to a short and plain issue. Either we must leave our sins, or die in them; either we must repent of them, or be judged for them; either we must forsake our sins, and break off that wicked course which we have lived in, or we must quit all hopes of heaven and happiness, nay, we cannot escape the damnation of hell. The clear revelation of a future judgment is so pressing an argument to repentance, as no man can in reason resist, that hath not a mind to be miserable. Now (saith St. Paul to the Athenians) he straightly chargeth all men every where to repent, because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness.*

Men may cheat themselves or suffer themselves to be deluded by others, about several means and devices of reconciling a wicked life, with the hopes of heaven and eternal salvation; as by mingling some pangs of sorrow for sin, and some hot fits of devotion with a sinful life; which is only the interruption of a wicked course, without reformation and amendment of life: but *let no man deceive you with vain words*, for our blessed Saviour hath provided no other ways to save men, but upon the terms of repentance and obedience.

Fourthly, This argument takes hold of the most desperate and profligate sinners, and still retains its force upon the minds of men, when almost all other considerations fail, and have lost their efficacy upon us. Many men are gone so far in an evil course, that

that neither shame of their vices, nor the love of God and virtue, nor the hopes of heaven are of any force with them, to reclaim them and bring them to a better mind: but there is one handle yet left, whereby to lay hold of them, and that is their *fear*. This is a passion that lies deep in our nature, being founded in self-preservation, and sticks so closely to us, that we cannot quit ourselves of it, nor shake it off. Men may put off ingenuity, and break thro' all obligations of gratitude. Men may harden their foreheads, and conquer all sense of shame; but they can never perfectly stifle and subdue their *fears*; they can hardly so extinguish *the fear of hell*, but that some sparks of that fire will ever and anon be flying about in their consciences, especially when they are made sober, and brought to themselves by affliction, and by the present apprehensions of death have a nearer sight of another world. And if it was so hard for the heathen to conquer these apprehensions, how much harder must it be to Christians, who have so much greater assurance of these things, and to whom *the wrath of God is so clearly revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men?*

Fifthly, No religion in the world ever urged this argument upon men, with that force and advantage which Christianity does. The philosophy of the heathen gave men no steady assurance of the thing; the most knowing persons among them were not agreed about a future state; the greatest part of them spake but doubtfully concerning another life. And besides the natural jealousies and suspicions of mankind concerning these things, they had only some fair probabilities of reason, and the authority of their Poets, who talkt they knew not what about *the Elisian fields*, and *the infernal regions*, and *the three judges of hell*; so that the wisest among them had hardly assurance enough in themselves of the truth of the thing, to press it upon others with any great confi-

SERM. dence, and therefore it was not likely to have any
 LVIII. great efficacy upon the generality of mankind.

As for the Jewish religion; tho' that supposed and took for granted the rewards of another world, as a principle of natural religion; yet in the law of *Moses* there was no particular and express revelation of the life of the world to come; and what was deduced from it, was by remote and obscure consequence. Temporal promises and threatnings it had many and clear, and their eyes were so dazzled with these, that it is probable that the generality of them did but little consider a future state, till they fell into great temporal calamities under the *Grecian* and *Roman* empires, whereby they were almost necessarily awaken'd to the consideration and hopes of a better life, to relieve them under their present evils and sufferings; and yet even in that time they were divided into two great factions about this matter, the one affirming, and the other as confidently denying any life after this. *But the gospel hath brought life and immortality to light*, as we are assured from heaven of the truth and reality of another state, and a future judgment. The Son of God was sent into the world to preach this doctrine, and rose again from the dead, and was taken up into heaven, for a visible demonstration to all mankind of another life after this, and consequently of a future judgment, which no man ever doubted of, that did firmly believe a future state.

The sum of all that I have said is this; the Gospel hath plainly declared to us, that the only way to salvation is by forsaking our sins, and living a holy and virtuous life; and the most effectual argument in the world to persuade men to this, is the consideration of the infinite danger that a sinful course exposeth men to, since *the wrath of God* continually hangs over sinners, and if they continue in their sins, will certainly fall upon them, and overwhelm them

with

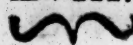
with misery, and he that is not moved by this argument, is lost to all intents and purposes.

SERM.
LVIII.

All that now remains, is to urge this argument upon men, and from the serious consideration of it, to persuade them to repent, and reform their wicked lives. And was there ever age wherein this was more needful? when *iniquity* doth not only *abound*, but even *rage* among us; when infidelity and profaneness, and all manner of lewdness and vice appears so boldly and openly, and men commit the greatest abominations without blushing at them; when vice hath got such head that it can hardly bear to be check'd and controll'd, and when, as the *Roman* historian complains of his times, *ad ea tempora, quibus nec vitia nostra nec remedia pati possumus, perventum est*; "things are come to that pass, that we can neither bear our vices, nor the remedies of them." Our vices are grown to a prodigious and intolerable height, and yet men hardly have the patience to hear of them; and surely a disease is then dangerous indeed, when it cannot bear the severity that is necessary to a cure. But yet, notwithstanding this, we who are the messengers of God to men, to warn them of their sin and danger, must not keep silence, and spare to tell them both of their sins, and of the judgment of God which hangs over them; *that God will visit for these things, and that his soul will be avenged on such a nation as this*. At least we may have leave to warn others, who are not yet run to the same excess of riot, to save themselves from this untoward generation. *God's judgments are abroad in the earth, and call aloud upon us, to learn righteousness*.

But this is but a small consideration, in comparison of the judgment of another world, which we who call ourselves Christians do profess to believe, as one of the chief articles of our faith. The consideration of this should check and cool us in the heat of all our sinful pleasures; and that bitter irony of

Solomon

SERM. *Solomon should cut us to the heart; Rejoice O young*
 LVIII. *man in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the*
 *days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart,*
and in the sight of thine eyes; but know that for all
these things God will bring thee into judgment. Think
often and seriously on that time, wherein the wrath
of God, which is now revealed against sin, shall be exe-
cuted upon sinners; and if we believe this, we are
strangely stupid and obstinate, if we be not moved
by it. The assurance of this made St. Paul extreme-
ly importunate in exhorting men to avoid so great
danger, 2 Cor. v. 10, 11. We must all appear before
the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive
the things done in the body, according to what he hath
done, whether it be good or evil. Knowing therefore
the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men. And if this
ought to move us to take so great a care of others,
much more of ourselves. The judgment to come is
a very amazing consideration, it is a fearful thing to
hear of it, but it will be much more terrible to see it,
especially to those whose guilt must needs make them
so heartily concern'd in the dismal consequences of it;
and yet as sure as I stand, and you sit here, this great
and terrible day of the Lord will come, and who may
abide his coming! what will we do, when that day
shall surprize us careless and unprepared! what un-
speakable horror and amazement will then take hold
of us! when lifting up our eyes to heaven, we shall see
the Son of man coming in the clouds of it, with power
and great glory; when that powerful voice which shall
pierce the ears of the dead shall ring through the
world, Arise ye dead, and come to judgment; when the
mighty trumpet shall sound, and awake the sleepers
of a thousand years, and summon the dispersed parts
of the bodies of all men that ever lived, to rally
together and take their place; and the souls and
bodies of men which have been so long strangers to
one another, shall meet and be united again, to re-
 ceive

ceive the doom due to their deeds ; what fear shall SERM.
then surprize sinners, and how will they tremble at LVIII.
the presence of the great Judge, and for the glory of
his Majesty! how will their consciences fly in their
faces, and their own hearts condemn them, for their
wicked and ungodly lives, and even prevent that
sentence which yet shall certainly be pass'd and exe-
cuted upon them ! But I will proceed no farther in
this argument, which hath so much of terror in it !

I will conclude my sermon, as *Solomon* doth his *Ec-
clesiastes*, Chap. xii. 13, 14. *Let us hear the conclusion
of the whole matter ; fear God, and keep his command-
ments, for this is the whole of man ; for God shall bring
every work into judgment, and every secret thing, whe-
ther it be good, or whether it be evil.* To which I
will only add that serious and merciful admonition
of a greater than *Solomon*, I mean the great Judge
of the whole world, our blessed Lord and
Saviour, *Luke xxi. 34, 35, 36. Take heed to yourselves,
lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting,
and drunkenness and the cares of this life, and so that
day come upon you at unawares. For as a snare shall it
come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.
Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be ac-
counted worthy to escape all these things that shall come
to pass, and to stand before the Son of man : To whom
with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, &c.*

S E R M O N L I X.

Knowledge and Practice Necessary in
Religion.

J O H N xiii. 17.

If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

SERM.
LIX.

TWO things make up religion, the *knowledge* and the *practice* of it; and the *first* is wholly in order to the *second*; and God hath not revealed to us the knowledge of himself and his will, merely for the improvement of our understanding, but for the bettering of our hearts and lives; not to entertain our minds with the speculations of religion and virtue, but to form and govern our actions. *If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.*

In which words, our blessed Saviour does from a particular instance take occasion to settle a general conclusion; namely, that religion doth mainly consist in practice, and that the knowledge of his doctrine without the real effects of it upon our lives, will bring no man to heaven. In the beginning of this chapter, our great Lord and Master, to testify his love to his disciples, and to give them a lively instance and example of that great virtue of humility, is pleased to condescend to a very low and mean office, such as was used to be performed by servants to their masters, and not by the master to his servants; namely, to wash their feet; and when he had done this, he asks them if they did understand the meaning of this strange action. *Know ye what I have done unto you? ye call me Master, and*
Lord,

Lord, and ye say well, for so I am: If I then your SERM.
 Lord and Master have washed your feet, ye ought also LIX.
 to wash one anothers feet; for I have given you an ex-
 ample, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily,
 verily, I say unto you, the servant is not greater than
 the Lord, neither he that is sent, greater than he
 that sent him; if ye know these things, happy are ye if ye
 do them. As if he had said, This which I have now
 done, is easy to be understood, and so likewise are
 all those other christian graces and virtues, which I
 have heretofore by my doctrine and example re-
 commended to you; but it is not enough to know
 these things, but ye must likewise *do* them. The
 end and the life of all our knowledge in religion, is
 to put in practice what we know. It is necessary
 indeed that we should know our duty, but know-
 ledge alone will never bring us to that happiness,
 which religion designs to make us partakers of, if
 our knowledge have not its due and proper influence
 upon our lives. Nay, so far will our knowledge be
 from making us happy, if it be separated from the
 virtues of a good life, that it will prove one of the
 heaviest aggravations of our misery; and it is as if
 he had said, *if ye know these things, wo be unto you, if ye
 do them not.*

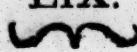
From these words then, I shall observe these
three things, which I shall speak but briefly to.

First, That the knowledge of God's will, and
 our duty, is necessary to the practice of it; *if ye
 know these things*, which supposeth that we must
know our duty, before we can *do* it.

Secondly, That the knowledge of our duty, and
 the practice of it, may be, and too often are sepa-
 rated. This likewise the text supposeth, that men
 may *know* their duty, and yet not *do* it; and that
 this is very frequent, which is the reason why our
 Saviour gives this caution.

Thirdly, That the practice of religion, and the
 doing of what we know to be our duty, is the only
 way

SERM. way to happiness; *if ye know these things, happy*
 LIX. *are ye if ye do them.* I begin with the

 *First* of these, namely, That the knowledge of God's will and our duty is necessary in order to the practice of it. The truth of this proposition is so clear and evident at first view, that nothing can obscure it, and bring it in question, but to endeavour to prove it; and therefore instead of spending time in that, I shall take occasion from it, justly to reprove that preposterous course which is taken, and openly avowed and justified by some, as the safest and best way to make men religious, and to bring them to happiness; namely, by taking away from them the means of knowledge; as if the best way to bring men *to do the will of God*, were to keep men from *knowing it*. For what else can be the meaning of that maxim so current in the Church of Rome, that *ignorance is the mother of devotion*? or of that strange and injurious practice of theirs of locking up from the people that great store-house and treasury of divine knowledge, *the holy scriptures*, in an unknown tongue?

I know very well, that in justification of this hard usage of their people it is pretended that knowledge is apt to puff men up, to make them proud and contentious, refractory and disobedient, and heretical, and what not? and particularly, that the free and familiar use of the holy scriptures permitted to the people, hath ministred occasion to the people of falling into great and dangerous errors, and of making great disturbance and divisions among Christians. For answer to this pretence, I desire these *four or five* things may be considered.

First, That unless this be the *natural* and *necessary* effect of knowledge in religion, and of the free use of the holy scriptures, there is no force in this reason; and if this be the *proper* and *natural* effect of this knowledge, then this reason will reach a great way farther, than those who make use of it are willing it should.

Secondly,

Secondly, That this is not the *natural* and *necessary* effect of knowledge in religion, but only *accidental*, and proceeding from mens abuse of it; for which the thing itself is not to be taken away. SERM. LIX.

Thirdly, That the proper and natural effects and consequences of *ignorance*, are equally pernicious, and much more certain and unavoidable, than those which are accidentally occasion'd by *knowledge*.

Fourthly, That if this reason be good, it is much stronger for withholding the Scriptures from the Priests and the learned, than from the people.

Fifthly, That this danger was as great, and as well known in the Apostles times, and yet they took a quite contrary course.

First, I desire it may be consider'd that unless this be the *natural* and *necessary* effect of knowledge in religion, and of the free use of the holy Scriptures, there is no force in this reason; for that which is *necessary*, or *highly useful*, ought not to be taken away, because it is liable to be perverted, and abused to ill purposes. If it ought, then not only knowledge in religion, but all other knowledge ought to be restrained and suppress'd; for all knowledge is apt to *puff up*, and liable to be abused to many ill purposes. At this rate, light, and liberty, and reason, yea and life itself, ought all to be taken away, because they are all greatly abused by many men, to some ill purposes or other; so that unless these ill effects do *naturally* and *necessarily* spring from knowledge in religion, the objection from them is of no force; and if they do necessarily flow from it, then this reason will reach a great way farther than those that make use of it are willing it should; for if this be true, that the knowledge of religion, as it is revealed in the holy Scriptures, is *of its own nature* so pernicious, as to make men proud and contentious and heretical, and disobedient to authority, then the blame of all this would fall upon our blessed Saviour, for revealing so pernicious a doctrine,

SERM. rine, and upon his Apostles for publishing this
 LIX. doctrine in a known tongue to all mankind, and
 thereby laying the foundation of perpetual schisms
 and heresies in the church.

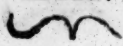
Secondly, But this is not the *natural* and *necessa-*
ry effect of knowledge in religion, but only *acci-*
dental, and proceeding from mens abuse of it, for
 which the thing itself ought not to be taken away.
 And thus much certainly they will grant, because
 it cannot with any face be denied; and if so, then
 the means of knowledge are not to be denied, but
 only men are to be cautioned not to pervert and a-
 buse them. And if any man abuse the holy Scrip-
 tures to the patronizing of error or heresy, or to
 any other bad purpose, he does it at his peril, and
 must give an account to God for it, but ought not
 to be deprived of the means of knowledge, for fear
 he should make an ill use of them. We must not
 hinder men from being *Christians*, to preserve them
 from being *Hereticks*, and put out mens eyes, for
 fear they should some time or other take upon them
 to dispute their way with their guides.

I remember that St. Paul, 1 Cor. viii. 1. takes
 notice of this *accidental* inconvenience of *know-*
ledge, that it *puffeth up*, and that this pride occa-
 sioned great contentions and divisions among them;
 but the remedy which he prescribes against this
 mischief of knowledge is not to with-hold from
 men the means of it, and to celebrate the service of
 God, the prayers of the church, and the reading
 of the Scriptures *in an unknown tongue*, but quite
 contrary. Chap. xiv. of that epistle, he strictly
 enjoins that the service of God in the church be
 so performed, as may be for the *edification* of the
 people; which he says cannot be, if it be celebra-
 ted *in an unknown tongue*; and the remedy he pre-
 scribes against the *accidental* mischief and inconve-
 nience of knowledge, is not *ignorance*, but *chari-*
ty, to govern their knowledge, and to help them

to make right use of it; *ver. 20. of that chap. af-* SERM.
 ter he had declared that the service of God ought LIX.
 to be performed *in a known tongue*, he immediately 
 adds, *Brethren, be not children in understanding;*
howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding
be ye men. He commends knowledge, he encour-
 rageth it, he requires it of all Christians; so far is
 he from checking the pursuit of it, and depriving
 the people of the means of it. And indeed there is
 nothing in the Christian religion, but what is fit
 for every man to know, because there is nothing
 in it, but what is design'd to promote holiness and
 a good life; and if men make any other use of their
 knowledge, it is their own fault, for it certainly
 tends to make men good; and being so useful and
 necessary to so good a purpose, men ought not to
 be debarr'd of it.

Thirdly, Let it be consider'd, that the *proper* and
natural effects and consequences of *ignorance* are e-
 qually pernicious, and much more certain and una-
 voidable, than those which are *accidentally* occa-
 sion'd by *knowledge*; for so far as a man is ignorant
 of his duty, it is impossible he should do it. He
 that hath the knowledge of religion, may be a
 bad Christian, but he that is destitute of it, can be
 none at all. Or if ignorance do beget and promote
 some kind of devotion in men, it is such a devoti-
 on as is not properly *religion*, but *superstition*; the
 ignorant man may be *zealously superstitious*, but
 without some measure of knowledge no man can
 be *truly religious*. *That the soul be without knowledge*
it is not good, says *Solomon, Prov. xix. 2.* because
 good practices depend upon our knowledge, and
 must be directed by it; when as a man that is trai-
 ned up only to the outward performance of some
 things in religion, as to the saying over so many
 prayers in an unknown tongue, this man cannot
 be *truly religious*, because nothing is *religious*, that
 is not a *reasonable service*; and no service can be

SERM. *reasonable*, that is not directed by our *understanding*.

LIX.  Indeed, if the end of prayer were only to give God to understand what we want, it were all one what language we prayed in, and whether we understood what we asked of him or not : but so long as the end of prayer is to testify the sense of our own wants, and of our dependance upon God for the supply of them, it is impossible that any man should in any tolerable propriety of speech be said *to pray*, who does not understand what he asks; and the saying over so many *Pater Nosters* by one that does not understand the meaning of them, is no more a *prayer*, than the repeating over so many verses in *Virgil*. And if this were good reasoning, that men must not be permitted to know so much as they can in religion, for fear they should grow troublesome with their knowledge, then certainly the best way in the world to maintain peace in the Christian church, would be to let the people know nothing at all in religion; and the best way to secure the ignorance of the people would be to keep the priests as ignorant as the people, and then to be sure they could teach them nothing: but then the mischief would be, that out of a fondness to maintain peace in the Christian church, there would be no church, nor no Christianity; which would be the same wise contrivance, as if a Prince should destroy his subjects, to keep his kingdom quiet.

Fourthly, Let us likewise consider, that if this reason be good, it is much stronger for withholding the Scriptures from the Priests, and the learned, than from the people; because the danger of starting errors and heresies, and countenancing them from Scripture, and managing them plausibly and with advantage, is much more to be feared from the learned, than from the common people; and the experience of all ages hath shewn, that the great broachers and abettors of heresy in the Christian church, have been men of learning and wit;

wit; and most of the famous heresies, that are re-
 SERM.
 corded in ecclesiastical history, have their names LIX.
 from some learned man or other; so that it is a
 great mistake to think that the way to prevent
 error and heresy in the church, is to take the Bible
 out of the hands of the people, so long as the free
 use of it is permitted to men of learning and skill,
 in whose hands the danger of perverting it is much
 greater. The antient fathers, I am sure, do fre-
 quently prescribe to the people the constant and
 careful reading of the holy Scriptures, as the surest
 antidote against the poison of dangerous errors,
 and damnable heresies; and if there be so much
 danger of seduction into error from the oracles of
 truth, by what other or better means can we hope
 to be secured against this danger? if *the word of*
God be so cross and improper a means to this end,
 one would think that the *teachings of men* should
 be much less effectual; so that men must either be
 left in their ignorance, or they must be permitted
 to learn from *the word of truth*; and whatever
 force this reason of the danger of heresy hath in
 it, to deprive the common people of the use of
 the Scriptures, I am sure it is much stronger to
 wrest them out of the hands of the Priests and the
 learned, because they are much more capable of
 perverting them to so bad a purpose.

Fifthly, and lastly, This danger was as great and
 visible in the age of the Apostles, as it is now;
 and yet they took a quite contrary course: there
 were heresies then, as well as now, and either the
 Scriptures were not thought by being in the
 hands of the people to be the cause of them, or
 they did not think the taking of them out of
 their hands a proper remedy. The Apostles in all
 their epistles do earnestly exhort the people to
 grow in knowledge, and commend them for *search-*
ing the Scriptures, and charge them that *the word*
of God should dwell richly in them. And St. Peter

SERM. takes particular notice of some men wresting some
 LIX. difficult passages in St. Paul's epistles, as likewise
 in the other Scriptures, to their own destruction,
 2. Pet. iii. 16. where speaking of St. Paul's epistles, he says, *there are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.* Here the danger objected is taken notice of; but the remedy prescribed by St. Peter, is not to take from the people the use of the Scriptures, and to keep them in ignorance; but after he had caution'd against the like weakness and errors, he exhorts them to grow in knowledge, ver. 17, 18. *Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before (that is, seeing ye are so plainly told and warn'd of this danger) beware lest ye also being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness; but grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, (that is, of the Christian religion;) believing, it seems, that the more knowledge they had in religion, the less they would be in danger of falling into damnable errors.* I proceed to the

Second observation, viz. That the knowledge of our duty, and the practice of it, may and often are separated. This likewise is supposed in the text, that men may, and often do know the will of God, and their duty, and yet fail in the practice of it. Our Saviour elsewhere supposeth, that many know their master's will, who not do it; and he compares those that hear his sayings, and do them not, to a foolish man that built his house upon the sand. And St. James speaks of some, who are hearers of the word only, but not doers of it, and for that reason fall short of happiness. And this is no wonder, because the attaining to that knowledge of religion which is necessary to salvation is no difficult task. A great part of it is written in our hearts, and we cannot be ignorant of it if we would; as that
 there

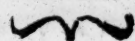
there is a God, and a Providence, and another SERM.
state after this life, wherein we shall be rewarded, LIX.
or punished, according as we have lived here in
this world; that God is to be worshipped, to be
prayed to for what we want, and to be praised for
what we enjoy. Thus far nature instructs men in
religion, and in the great duties of morality, as
justice and temperance, and the like. And as for
revealed religion, as that Jesus Christ the Son of
God came in our nature to save us, by revealing our
duty more clearly and fully to us, by giving us
a more perfect example of holiness and obedience
in his own life and conversation, and by dying for
our sins, and rising again for our justification;
these are things which men may easily understand;
and yet for all that, they are difficultly brought
to the practice of religion.

I shall instance in three sorts of persons, in whom
the *knowledge* of religion is more remarkably se-
parated from the *practice* of it; and for distinction
sake, I may call them by these three names; the
speculative, the *formal*, and the *hypocritical* chris-
tian. The first of these makes religion only a
science, the second takes it up for a *fashion*, the third
makes some *worldly advantage* of it, and serves
some *secular interest* and *design* by it. All these are
upon several accounts concerned to understand
something of religion; but yet will not be brought
to the practice of it.

The *first* of these, whom I call the *speculative*
Christian, is he who makes religion only a *science*,
and studies it as a piece of learning, and part of
that general knowledge in which he affects the
reputation of being a master; he hath no design
to practice it, but he is loth to be ignorant of it,
because the knowledge of it is a good ornament of
conversation, and will serve for discourse and en-
tertainment among those who are disposed to be
grave and serious; and because he does not intend

SERM. to practice it, he passeth over those things which
 LIX. are plain and easy to be understood, and applies
 himself chiefly to the consideration of those things
 which are more abstruse, and will afford matter of
 controversy and subtle dispute, as the doctrine of the
Trinity, Predestination, Free-will, and the like. Of
 this temper seem many of the school-men of old
 have been, who made it their great study and business
 to puzzle religion, and to make every thing in it
 intricate, by starting infinite questions and diffi-
 culties about the plainest truths? and of the same
 rank usually are the heads and leaders of parties
 and factions in religion, who by needless contro-
 versies and endless disputes about some thing or o-
 ther, commonly of no great moment in religion,
 hinder themselves and others from minding the
 practice of the great and substantial duties of a
 good life.

Secondly, There is the formal Christian, who
 takes up religion for a *fashion*. He is born and
 bred in a nation where Christianity is profess'd,
 and countenanc'd, and therefore thinks it conve-
 nient for him to know something of it. Of this
 sort there are, I fear, a great many, who read the
 Scriptures sometimes as others do, to know the
 history of it; and go to church, and hear the Gos-
 pel preached, and by this means come in some mea-
 sure to understand the history of our Saviour, and
 the christian doctrine; but do not at all bend them-
 selves to comply with the great end and design of
 it; they do not heartily endeavour to form and
 fashion their lives according to the laws and pre-
 cepts of it; they think they are very good Chri-
 stians, if they can give an account of the Articles
 of their faith, profess their belief in God and
 Christ, and declare that they hope to be saved by
 him, tho' they take no care to keep his command-
 ments. These are they of whom our Saviour speaks,
Luke vi. 46. who call him, Lord, Lord; but do not
the things which he said. *Thirdly,*



Thirdly, Hypocritical Christians, who make an interest of religion, and serve some worldly design by it. These are concerned to understand religion more than ordinary, that they may counterfeit it handsomely, and may not be at a loss when they have occasion to put on the garb of it. And this is one part of the character which the Apostle gives of those persons, who he foretels would appear in the last days, 2 Tim. iii. 2. he says they should be lovers of their own selves, covetous, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying the power of it.

Now these men do not love religion, but they have occasion to make use of it, and therefore they will have no more of it than will just serve their purpose and design. And indeed he that hath any other design in religion than to please God, and save his soul, needs no more than so much knowledge of it, as will serve him to act a part in it upon occasion. I come to the

Third and last observation, viz. That the practice of religion, and the doing of what we know to be our duty, is the only way to happiness; if we know these things, happy are ye if ye do them; not if you know these things happy are ye; but if ye know and do them. Now to convince men of so important a truth, I shall endeavour to make out these two things.

First, That the Gospel makes the practice of religion a necessary condition of our happiness.

Secondly, That the nature and reason of the thing makes it a necessary qualification for it.

First, The Gospel makes the practice of religion a necessary condition of our happiness. Our Saviour in his first Sermon, where he repeats the promise of blessedness so often, makes no promise of it to the mere knowledge of religion, but to the habit and practice of christian graces and virtues,

SERM. of meekness, and humility, and mercifulness, and

LIX. righteousness, and peaceableness, and purity, and patience under sufferings, and persecutions for righteousness sake. And *Matth. vii. 2.* our Saviour doth most fully declare, that the happiness which he promises, did not belong to those who made profession of his name, and were so well acquainted with his doctrine, as to be able to instruct others, if themselves in the mean time did not practice it: *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and done many wondrous works? and then will I profess unto them, I never knew you, depart from me ye workers of iniquity. Tho' they profess to know him, yet because their lives were not answerable to the knowledge which they had of him, and his doctrine, he declares that he will not know them, but bids them depart from him. And then he goes on to shew, that tho' a man attend to the doctrine of Christ, and gain the knowledge of it; yet if it do not descend into his life, and govern his actions, all that man's hopes of heaven are fond and groundless; and only that man's hopes of heaven are well grounded, who knows the doctrine of Christ, and does it, ver. 24. Whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doth them, I will liken him to a wise man, who built his house upon a rock, and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock; and every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doth them not, shall be liken'd to a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand, and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it. Tho' a man had a knowledge of religion as great and perfect as*
that

that which Solomon had of natural things, *large as* SERM. *the sand upon the sea-shore*, yet all this knowledge LIX. separated from *practice* would be like the *sand* also in another respect, a *weak foundation* for any man to build his hopes of happiness upon.

To the same purpose St. Paul speaks, *Rom. ii. 13. Not the hearers of the law are just before God; but the doers of the law shall be justified.* So likewise St. James, Chap. i. 22. *Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves; and ver. 25. Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, (that is, the law or doctrine of the Gospel) and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed;* and therefore he adds, that the truth and reality of religion are to be measured by the effects of it, in the government of our words, and ordering of our lives, *ver. 26. If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this; to visit the fatherless and widow in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.* Men talk of religion, and keep a great stir about it; but nothing will pass for *true religion before God*, but the virtuous and charitable actions of a good life; and God will accept no man to eternal life upon any other condition. So the Apostle tells us most expressly, *Heb. xii. 14. Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.*

Secondly, As God hath made the *practice* of religion a necessary condition of our happiness, so the very nature and reason of the thing makes it a necessary qualification for it. It is necessary that we become like to God, in order to the enjoyment of him; and nothing makes us like to God, but the *practice* of holiness and goodness. Knowledge indeed is a divine perfection; but that alone, as it doth

SERM. doth not render a man like God, so neither doth it
 LIX. dispose him for the enjoyment of him; If a man had
 the understanding of an Angel, he might for all
 that be a Devil; *he that committeth sin is of the Devil,*
 and whatever knowledge such a man may have, he
 is of a devilish temper and disposition: *but every one*
that doth righteousness is born of God. By this we are
like God, and only by our likeness to him, do we
 become capable of *the sight and enjoyment* of him;
 therefore every man that hopes to be happy by
 the blessed sight of God in the next life, must
 endeavour after holiness in this life. So the same
 Apostle tells us, 1 John iii. 3. *Every man that hath*
this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure.
 A wicked temper and disposition of mind is in the
 very nature of the thing, utterly inconsistent with
 all reasonable hopes of heaven.

Thus I have shewn that the *practice* of religion,
 and the *doing* of what we *know* to be our duty, is the
 only way to happiness.

And now the proper inference from all this is,
 to put men upon the careful *practice* of religion.
 Let no man content himself with the *knowledge* of
 his duty, unless he *do* it; and to this purpose I shall
 briefly urge these *three* considerations.

First, This is the great end of all our knowledge
 in religion, to *practice* what we *know*. The know-
 ledge of God and of our duty hath so essential a re-
 spect to practice, that the Scripture will hardly al-
 low it to be properly called *knowledge*, unless it have
 an influence upon our lives, 1 John ii. 3, 4. *Hereby*
we know that we know him, if we keep his command-
ments. He that saith I know him, and keepeth not his
commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in
him.

Secondly, *Practice* is the best way to increase and per-
 fect our *Knowledge*. *Knowledge* directs us in our practice,
 but practice confirms and increaseth our knowledge,
 John vii. 17. *If a man will do the will of God, he*
shall

shall know of the doctrine. The best way to know SERM.
God, is to be like him ourselves, and to have the LIX.
lively image of his perfections imprinted upon our
souls; and the best way to understand the Christian
religion, is seriously to set about the practice of it;
this will give a man a better notion of Christianity
than any speculation can.

Thirdly, Without the *practice* of religion, our
knowledge will be so far from being any furtherance
and advantage to our happiness, that it will be one
of the unhappiest aggravations of our misery. He
that is ignorant of his duty, hath some excuse to pre-
tend for himself: but he that understands the Chri-
stian religion, and does not live according to it,
hath *no cloak for his sin*. The defects of our know-
ledge, unless they be gross and wilful, will find an
easy pardon with God: but the faults of our lives
shall be severely punish'd, when we *know* our duty
and would not *do* it. I will conclude with that of
our Saviour, *Luke xii. 47, 48. That servant which*
knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither
did according to his will, shall be beaten with many
stripes; for unto whomsoever much is given, of him
much shall be required. When we come into the other
world, no consideration will sting us more, and add
more to the rage of our torments than this, that we
did wickedly, when we understood to have done
better; and chose to make ourselves miserable, when
we knew so well the way to have been happy.

S E R M O N LX.

Practice in Religion necessary, in proportion to our Knowledge.

LUKE xii. 47, 48.

And that servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will shall be beaten with many stripes: But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.

SERM.
LX.

IN prosecution of the argument which I handled in my last discourse, namely, that the knowledge of our duty, without the practice of it, will not bring us to happiness, I shall proceed to shew, that if our practice be not answerable to our knowledge, this will be a great aggravation both of our sin and punishment.

And to this purpose, I have pitched upon these words of our Lord, which are the application of two parables, which he had deliver'd before, to stir up men to a diligent and careful practice of their duty, that so they may be in a continual readiness and preparation for the coming of their Lord. The first parable is more general, and concerns all men, who are represented as so many servants in a great family, from which the Lord is absent, and they being uncertain of the time of his return, should always

ways be in a condition and posture to receive him. SERM.
 Upon the hearing of this parable, *Peter* enquires of LX.
 our Saviour, whether he intended this only for his
 disciples, or for all? To which question our Saviour
 returns an answer in another parable which more par-
 ticularly concerned them; who because they were to
 be the chief rulers and governors of his church, are
 represented by the stewards of a great family, *ver.*
42. Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom
his Lord shall make ruler over his household, to give
them their portion of meat in due season? If he dis-
charge his duty, blessed is he; but if he shall take oc-
casion in his Lord's absence to domineer over his
fellow-servants and riotously to waste his Lord's
goods, his Lord, when he comes will punish him af-
ter a more severe and exemplary manner.

And then follows the application of the whole,
 in the words of the text, *And that servant which*
knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither
did according to his will, shall be beaten with many
stripes. As if he had said, and well may such a ser-
 vant deserve so severe a punishment, who having
 such a trust committed to him, and knowing his
 Lord's will so much better, yet does contrary to it;
 upon which our Saviour takes occasion to compare
 the fault and punishment of those who have greater
 advantages and opportunities of knowing their duty,
 with those who are ignorant of it; *That servant*
which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself,
neither did according to it, shall be beaten with many
stripes: but he that knew not, but did commit things
worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes.
 And then he adds the reason and the equity of this
 proceeding, *For unto whomsoever much is given, of*
him shall be much required; and to whom men have com-
mitted much, of him they will ask the more.

The words in general do allude to that law of the
 Jews, mentioned *Deut. xxv. 2.* where the judge is
 required to see the malefactor punish'd according to
 his

SERM. his fault, by a certain number of stripes; in relation
 LX. to which known law among the Jews, our Saviour
 here says, that *those who knew their Lord's will, and did it not, should be beaten with many stripes: but those who knew it not, should be beaten with few stripes.* So that there are two observations lie plainly before us in the words.

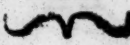
First, That the greater advantages and opportunities any man hath of knowing his duty, if he do it not, the greater will be his condemnation; *the servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to it, shall be beaten with many stripes.*

Secondly, That ignorance is a great excuse of mens faults, and will lessen their punishment; *but he that knew not, but did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes.*

I shall begin with the latter of these *first*, because it will make way for the other; *viz.* That ignorance is a great excuse of mens faults, and will lessen their punishment; *he that knew not, but did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes.*

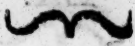
For the clearing of this, it will be requisite to consider what ignorance it is which our Saviour here speaks of; and this is necessary to be enquired into, because it is certain that there is some sort of ignorance which doth wholly excuse and clear from all manner of guilt; and there is another sort, which doth either not at all, or very little extenuate the faults of men; so that it must be a third sort, different from both these, which our Saviour here means.

First, There is an ignorance which doth wholly excuse and clear from all manner of guilt, and that is *an absolute and invincible ignorance*, when a person is wholly ignorant of the thing, which if he knew, he should be bound to do, but neither can nor could have help'd it, that he is ignorant of it; that is, he either had not the capacity, or wanted the means
 and

and opportunity of knowing it. In this case a per-^{SERM.}
son is in no fault, if he did not do what he never ^{LX.}
knew, nor could know to be his duty. For God 
measures the faults of men by their *wills*, and if
there be no defect there, there can be no guilt; for
no man is guilty, but he that is conscious to himself
that he would not do what he knew he ought to do,
or would do what he knew he ought not to do: Now
if a man be *simply* and *invincibly ignorant* of his duty,
his neglect of it is altogether *involuntary*; for the will
hath nothing to do, where the understanding doth
not first direct. And this is the case of *children*
who are not yet come to the use of reason; for tho'
they may do that which is *materially* a fault, yet it is
none in them, because by reason of their incapacity,
they are at present *invincibly ignorant* of what they
ought to do. And this is the case likewise of *idiots*,
who are under a natural incapacity of knowledge,
and so far as they are so, nothing that they do is im-
puted to them as a fault. The same may be said of
distracted persons, who are deprived either wholly,
or at some times, of the use of their understandings:
so far, and so long as they are thus deprived, they are
free from all guilt; and to persons who have the free
and perfect use of their reason, no neglect of any du-
ty is imputed, of which they are *absolutely* and *invin-*
cibly ignorant. For instance, it is a duty incumbent
upon all mankind, to believe in the Son of God,
where he is sufficiently manifested and revealed to
them; but those who never heard of him, nor had any
opportunity of coming to the knowledge of him,
shall not be condemn'd for this infidelity, because it
is impossible they should *believe on him, of whom*
they never heard; they may indeed be condemn-
ed upon other accounts, for sinning against the
light of nature, and for not obeying *the law which*
was written in their hearts; for what the Apostle
says of the revelation of the law, is as true of any o-
ther

SERM. ther revelation of God, *as many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned under the law, shall be judged by the law,* Rom. ii. 12. In like manner, those who have sinned without the Gospel, (that is, who never had the knowledge of it) shall not be condemned for any offence against that revelation which was never made to them, but for their violation of *the law of nature*; only they that have *sinned under the Gospel*, shall be judged by it.

Secondly, There is likewise another sort of ignorance, which either does not at all, or very little extenuate the faults of men, when men are not only ignorant, but *chuse to be so*; that is, when they wilfully neglect those means and opportunities of knowledge which are afforded to them; such as Job speaks of, Job xxi. 14. *Who say unto God, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.* And this sort of ignorance many among the Jews were guilty of, when our Saviour came and preached to them, but they would not be instructed by him; *the light came among them, but they loved darkness rather than light*, as he himself says of them; and as he says elsewhere of the Pharisees, *they rejected the council of God against themselves*, they wilfully shut their eyes against that light which offered itself to them; *they would not see with their eyes, nor hear with their ears, nor understand with their hearts, that they might be converted and healed.* Now an ignorance in this degree wilful, can hardly be imagined to carry any excuse at all in it. He that knew not his Lord's will, because he would not know it, because he wilfully rejected the means of coming to the knowledge of it, deserves to be beaten with as many stripes, as if he had known it; because he might have known it, and would not. He that will not take notice of the king's proclamation, or will stop his ears when it is read, and afterwards offends against it, does equally deserve punishment with those who have read it,

it, and heard it, and disobey it; because he was as **SERM.**
grossly faulty in not knowing it; and there is no rea- **LX.**
son that any man's gross fault should be his excuse. 

So that it is neither of these sorts of ignorance that our Saviour means, neither absolute and invincible ignorance, nor that which is grossly wilful and affected; for the first, men deserve not to be beaten at all, because they cannot help it; for the latter, they deserve not to be excused, because they might have helped their ignorance, and would not.

But our Saviour here speaks of such an ignorance as does in a good degree extenuate the fault, and yet not wholly excuse it; for he says of them, that they *knew not their Lord's will*, and yet that this ignorance did not wholly excuse them from blame, nor exempt them from punishment, *but they should be beaten with few stripes.* In the

Third place, there is an ignorance which is in some degree faulty, and yet does in a great measure excuse the faults which proceed from it; and this is when men are not absolutely ignorant of their duty, but only in comparison of others, who have a far more clear and distinct knowledge of it; and tho' they do not grossly and wilfully neglect the means of further knowledge, yet perhaps they do not make the best use they might of the opportunities they have of knowing their duty better; and therefore in comparison of others, who have far better means and advantages of knowing their Lord's will, they may be said not to know it, tho' they are not simply ignorant of it, but only have a more obscure and uncertain knowledge of it. Now this ignorance does in a great measure excuse such persons, and extenuate their crimes, in comparison of those who had a clear and more perfect knowledge of their Master's will; and yet it does not free them from all guilt; because they did not live up to that degree of knowledge which they had; and perhaps if they had used more care and industry, they might have known their Lord's will,

SERM. will, better. And this was the case of the heathens,
 LX. who in comparison of those who enjoyed the light of
 the Gospel, might be said not to have known their
 Lord's will, tho' as to many parts of their duty, they
 had some directions from natural light, and their
 consciences did urge them to many things by the ob-
 scure apprehensions and hopes of a future reward,
 and the fear of a future punishment. But this was
 but a very obscure and uncertain *knowledge*, in com-
 parison of the clear light of the Gospel, which hath
 discovered to us our duty so plainly by the laws and
 precepts of it, and hath presented us with such
 powerful motives and arguments to obedience in the
 promises and threatenings of it. And this likewise
 is the case of many christians; who either through
 the natural slowness of their understandings, or by the
 neglect of their parents and teachers, or other cir-
 cumstances of their education, have had far less
 means and advantages of knowledge than others.
 God does not expect so much from those, as from
 others, to whom he hath given greater capacity,
 and advantages of knowledge; and when our Lord
 shall come to call his servants to an account, they
 shall be beaten with fewer stripes than others; they
 shall not wholly escape, because they were not wholly
 ignorant; but by how much they had less knowledge
 than others, by so much their punishment shall be
 lighter.

And there is all the equity in the world it should
 be so, that men should be accountable according to
 what they have received, and that to whom less is
 given, less should be required at their hands. The
 Scripture hath told us, that *God will judge the world
 in righteousness*; now justice does require, that in
 taxing the punishment of offenders, every thing
 should be consider'd, that may be a just excuse and
 extenuation of their crimes, and that accordingly
 their punishment should be abated. Now the greatest
 extenuation of any fault is ignorance, which when
 it

it proceeds from no fault of ours, no fault can proceed from it ; so that so far as any man is innocently ignorant of his duty, so far he is excusable for the neglect of it : for every degree of ignorance takes off so much from the perverseness of the will ; & *nihil ardet in inferno, nisi propria voluntas* ; “ No-thing is punish’d in hell, but what is voluntary, and “ proceeds from our wills. SERM. LX.

I do not intend this discourse for any commendation of ignorance, or encouragement to it. For knowledge hath many advantages above it, and is much more desirable, if we use it well ; and if we do not, it is our own fault ; if we be not wanting to ourselves, we may be much happier by our knowledge, than any man can be by his ignorance ; for tho’ ignorance may plead an excuse, yet it can hope for no reward ; and it is always better to need no excuse, than to have the best in the world ready at hand to plead for ourselves. Besides, that we may do well to consider, that ignorance is no where an excuse where it is cherish’d ; so that it would be the vainest thing in the world for any man to foster it, in hopes thereby to excuse himself ; for where it is wilful and chosen, it is a fault, and (as I said before) it is the most unreasonable thing in the world, that any man’s fault should prove his excuse. So that this can be no encouragement to ignorance, to say that it extenuates the faults of men : for it does not extenuate them, whenever it is wilful and affected ; and whenever it is designed and chosen, it is wilful ; and then no man can reasonably design to continue ignorant, that he may have an excuse for his faults, because then the ignorance is wilful, and whenever it is so, it ceaseth to be an excuse.

I the rather speak this, because ignorance hath had the good fortune to meet with great patrons in the world, and to be extoll’d, tho’ not upon this account, yet upon another, for which there is less pretence of reason ; as if it were the mother of devotion. Of

SERM. superstition I grant it is, and of this we see plentiful
 LX. proof, among those who are so careful to preserve
 and cherish it: but that true piety and devotion
 should spring from it, is as unlikely, as that darkness
 should produce light. I do hope indeed, and
 charitably believe, that the ignorance in which some
 are detained by their teachers and governors, will
 be a real excuse, to as many of them as are other-
 wise honest and sincere; but I doubt not, but the er-
 rors and faults which proceed from this ignorance,
 will lie heavy upon those who keep them in it. I
 proceed to the

Second observation, That the great advantages and opportunities any man hath of knowing the will of God, and his duty, the greater will be his condemnation if he do not do it. The servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to it, shall be beaten with many stripes. Which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself; the preparation of our mind to do the will of God, whenever there is occasion and opportunity for it, is accepted with him; a will rightly disposed to obey God, tho' it be not brought into act for want of opportunity, does not lose its reward: but when, notwithstanding we know our Lord's will, there are neither of these, neither the act, nor the preparation and resolution of doing it, what punishment may we not expect?

The just God, in punishing the sins of men, proportions the punishment to the crime, and where the crime is greater, the punishment riseth; as amongst the Jews, where the crime was small, the malefactor was sentenced to *a few stripes*; where it was great, he was *beaten with many*. Thus our Saviour represents the great Judge of the world dealing with sinners; according as their sins are aggravated, he will add to their punishment. Now after all the aggravations of sin, there is none that doth more intrinsically heighten the malignity of it, than when it is
 committed

committed against the clear knowledge of our duty, SERM.
and that upon these *three* accounts: LX.

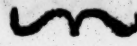
First, Because the knowledge of God's will is so great an advantage to the doing of it.

Secondly, Because it is a great obligation upon us to the doing of it.

Thirdly, Because the neglect of our duty in this case, cannot be without a great deal of wilfulness and contempt. I shall speak briefly to these *three*.

First, Because the knowledge of God's will is so great an advantage to the doing of it; and every advantage of doing our duty, is a certain aggravation of our neglect of it. And this is the reason which our Saviour adds here in the text, *For to whomsoever much is given, of them much will be required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.* It was, no doubt, a great discouragement and disadvantage to the heathens, that they were so doubtful concerning the will of God, and in many cases left to the uncertainty of their own reason, by what way and means they might best apply themselves to the pleasing of him; and this discouraged several of the wisest of them from all serious endeavours in religion, thinking it as good to do nothing, as to be mistaken about it. Others that were more naturally devout, and could not satisfy their consciences without some expressions of religion, fell into various superstitions, and were ready to embrace any way of worship which custom prescribed, or the fancies of men could suggest to them; and hence sprang all the stupid and barbarous idolatries of the heathen. For ignorance growing upon the world, that natural propension which was in the minds of men to religion, and the worship of a Deity, for want of certain direction, express'd itself in those foolish and abominable idolatries, which were practised among the heathens.

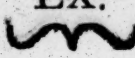
SERM. And is it not then a mighty advantage to us, that

LX.  we have the clear and certain direction of divine revelation? We have the will of God plainly discovered to us, and all the parts of our duty clearly defined and determined, so that no man that is in any measure free from interest and prejudice, can easily mistake in any great and material part of his duty. We have the nature of God plainly revealed to us, and such a character of him given, as is most suitable to our natural conceptions of a Deity, as render him both awful and amiable; for the Scripture represents him to us as great and good, powerful and merciful, a perfect hater of sin, and a great lover of mankind; and we have the law and manner of his worship (so far as was needful) and the rules of a good life clearly express'd and laid down: and as a powerful motive and argument to the obedience of those laws, a plain discovery made to us of the endless rewards and punishments of another world. And is not this a mighty advantage to the doing of God's will, to have it so plainly declared to us, and so powerfully enforced upon us? so that our duty lies plainly before us; we see what we have to do, and the danger of neglecting it; so that considering the advantage we have of doing God's will, by our clear knowledge of it, we are altogether inexcusable if we do it not.

Secondly, The knowledge of our Lord's will is likewise a great obligation upon us to the doing of it. For what ought in reason to oblige us more to do any thing, than to be fully assur'd that it is the will of God, and that it is the law of the great sovereign of the world, who is able to save, or to destroy? That it is the pleasure of him that made us, and who hath declared that he designs to make us happy, by our obedience to his laws? So that if we know these things to be the will of God, we have the greatest obligation to do them, whether we consider the authority of God, or our own interest; and
if

if we neglect them, we have nothing to say in SERM.
our own excuse. We know the law, and the ad- LX.
vantage of keeping it, and the penalty of breaking it; and if after this we will transgress, there is no apology to be made for us. They have something to plead for themselves, who can say, that though they had some apprehension of some parts of their duty, and their minds were apt to dictate to them that they ought to do some things, yet the different apprehensions of mankind about several of these things, and the doubts and uncertainties of their own minds concerning them, made them easy to be carried off from their duty, by the vicious inclinations of their own nature, and the tyranny of custom and example, and the pleasant temptations of flesh and blood; but had they had a clear and undoubted revelation from God, and had certainly known these things to be his will, this would have conquered and born down all objections and temptations to the contrary; or if it had not, would have stopt their mouths, and taken away all excuse from them. There is some colour in this plea, that in many cases they did not know certainly what the will of God was; but for us who own a clear revelation from God, and profess to believe it, what can we say for ourselves, to mitigate the severity of God towards us; why he should not pour forth all his wrath, and execute upon us the fierceness of his anger?

• *Thirdly,* The neglect of God's will when we know it, cannot be without a great deal of wilfulness and contempt. If we know it, and do it not, the fault is solely in our wills, and the more wilful any sin is, the more heinously wicked is it. There can hardly be a greater aggravation of a crime, than if it proceed from mere obstinacy and perverseness; and if we know it to be our Lord's will and do it not, we are guilty of the highest contempt of the greatest authority in the world. And do

SERM. we think this to be but a small aggravation, to affront the great sovereign judge of the world?
 LX.  not only to break his laws, but to trample upon them and despise them, when we know whose laws they are? *Will we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?* We believe that it is God who said, *Thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour; thou shalt not hate, or oppress, or defraud thy brother in any thing; but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself;* and will we notwithstanding venture to break these laws, knowing whose authority they are stamp't withal? After this contempt of him, what favour can we hope for from him? What can we say for ourselves, why any one of those many stripes which are threaten'd should be abated to us? *Ignosci aliquatenus ignorantiae potest; contemptus veniam non habet;* "Something may be pardoned to ignorance; but contempt can expect no forgiveness." He that strikes his prince not knowing him to be so, hath something to say for himself, that tho' he did a disloyal act, yet he did not proceed from a disloyal mind: but he that first acknowledgeth him for his prince, and then affronts him, deserves to be prosecuted with the utmost severity, because he did it wilfully, and in mere contempt. The knowledge of our duty, and that it is the will of God which we go against, takes away all possible excuse from us; for nothing can be said, why we should offend him who hath both authority to command us, and power to destroy us.

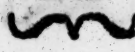
And thus I have as briefly as I could, represented to you the true ground and reason of the aggravation of those sins, which are committed against the clear knowledge of God's will, and our duty; because this knowledge is so great an advantage to the doing of our duty; so great an obligation upon us to it; and because the neglect of our

our Lord's will in this case, cannot be without SERM. great wilfulness, and a downright contempt of LX. his authority.

And shall I now need to tell you how much it concerns every one of us, to live up to that knowledge which we have of our Lord's will, and to prepare ourselves to do according to it; to be always in a readiness and disposition to do what we know to be his will, and actually to do it, when there is occasion and opportunity? And it concerns us the more, because we, in this age and nation, have so many advantages, above a great part of the world, of coming to the knowledge of our duty. We enjoy the clearest and most perfect revelation which God ever made of his will to mankind, and have the light of divine truth plentifully shed amongst us, by the free use of the holy Scriptures, which is not a sealed book to us, but lies open to be read, and studied by us; this spiritual food is *rained down* like Manna round about *our tents*; and every one may gather so much as is sufficient; we are not stinted, nor have the word of God given out to us in broken pieces, or mixt and adulterated, here a lesson of Scripture, and there a legend; but whole and entire, sincere and incorrupt.

God hath not left us, as he did the heathens for many ages, to the imperfect and uncertain direction of natural light; nor hath he revealed his will to us, as he did to the *Jews*, in dark types and shadows: but hath made a clear discovery of his mind and will to us. The dispensation which we are under, hath no veil upon it, *the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth; we are of the day, and of the light*, and therefore it may justly be expected that we should *put off the works of darkness, and walk as children of the light*. Every degree of knowledge which we have, is an aggravation of the sins committed against it, and when our Lord comes

SERM. comes to pass sentence upon us, will add to the number of our stripes. Nay, if God should inflict no

 LX. positive torment upon sinners; yet their own minds would deal most severely with them upon this account, and nothing will gall their consciences more, than to remember against what light they did offend. For herein lies the very nature and sting of all guilt, to be conscious to our selves, *that we knew what we ought to have done, and did it not.* The vices and corruptions which reigned in the world before, will be pardonable, in comparison of ours. *The times of that ignorance God winked at; but now he commands all men every where to repent.* Mankind had some excuse for their errors before, and God was pleased in a great measure to overlook them; *but if we continue still in our sins, we have no cloak for them.* All the degrees of light which we enjoy, are so many talents committed to us, by our Lord, for the improving whereof, he will call us to a strict account; *for unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required, and to whom he hath committed much, of him he will ask the more.* And nothing is more reasonable, than that men should account for all the advantages and opportunities they have had of knowing the will of God; and that as their knowledge was increased, so their sorrow and punishment should proportionably arise, if they sin against it. The ignorance of a great part of the world is deservedly pitied and lamented by us, but the condemnation of none is so bad, as those who having the knowledge of God's will, neglected to do it; *how much better had it been for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they had known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them!* If we had been born, and brought up in ignorance of the true God and his will, *we had had no sin,* in comparison of what now we have: *but now that we see, our sin remains.* This will aggravate our condemnation beyond measure,
that

that we had the knowledge of salvation so clearly SERM. revealed to us. Our duty lies plainly before us, LX. we know what we ought to do, and *what manner of persons we ought to be, in all holy conversation and godliness.* We believe the coming of our Lord to judgment, and we know not how soon he may be *revealed from heaven with his mighty Angels, not only to take vengeance on them that know not God, but on them that have known him, and yet obey not the Gospel of his Son.* And if all this will not move us to prepare ourselves to do our Lord's will, we deserve to have our stripes multiplied. No condemnation can be too heavy for those who offend against the clear knowledge of God's will, and their duty.

Let us then be persuaded to set upon the practice of what we know ; let the light which is in our understandings, descend upon our hearts and lives ; let us not dare to continue any longer in the practice of any known sin, nor in the neglect of any thing which we are convinced is our duty ; and *if our hearts condemn us not, neither for the neglect of the means of knowledge, nor for rebelling against the light of God's truth shining in our minds, and glaring upon our consciences, then have we confidence towards God : but if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knows all things.*

The first
Sermon on
this Text.

S E R M O N LXI.

The Sins of Men not chargeable upon
God ; but upon themselves.

* JAMES i. 13, 14.

Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man : But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

SERM.
LXI.

NEXT to the belief of a God, and his Providence, there is nothing more fundamentally necessary to the practice of a good life, than the belief of these two principles, *That God is not the author of sin, and that every man's sin lies at his own door, and he hath reason to blame himself for all the evil that he does.*

First, That God is not the author of sin, that he is no way necessary to our faults, either by tempting or forcing us to the commission of them. For if he were, they would neither properly be sins, nor could they be justly punished. They would not properly be sins, for sin is a contradiction to the will of God ; but supposing men to be either tempted or necessitated thereto, that which we call sin, would either be a meer passive obedience to the will of God, or an active compliance with it, but neither way a contradiction to it. Nor could these actions be justly punished ; for all punishment supposeth a fault, and a fault supposeth

supposeth liberty and freedom from force and necessity ; so that no man can be justly punished for that which he cannot help, and no man can help that, which he is necessitated and compell'd to. And tho' there were no force in the case, but only temptation, yet it would be unreasonable for the same person to tempt and punish. For as nothing is more contrary to the holiness of God, than to tempt men to sin ; so nothing can be more against justice and goodness, than first to draw men into a fault, and then to chastise them for it. So that this is a principle which lies at the bottom of all religion. *That God is not the author of the sins of men.* And then,

Secondly, That every man's fault lies at his own door, and he has reason enough to blame himself for all the evil that he does. And this is that which makes men properly guilty, that when they have done amiss they are conscious to themselves it was their own act, and they might have done otherwise ; and guilt is that which makes men liable to punishment ; and fear of punishment is the great restraint from sin, and one of the principal arguments for virtue and obedience.

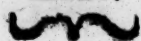
And both these principles our Apostle St. James does here fully assert in the words which I have read unto you. *Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God ; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man : But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.*

In which words these two things are plainly contained.

First, That God doth not tempt any man to sin. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God ; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.

Secondly, That every man's fault lies at his own door, and he is his own greatest tempter. But every
man

SERM. *man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own*
 LXI. *lust, and enticed.*



I. That God doth not tempt any man to sin. *Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God ; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.* In which words there are three things to be consider'd.

First, The proposition which the apostle here rejects, and that is, *That God tempts men.* *Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God.*

Secondly, The manner in which he rejects it. *Let no man say so.* By which manner of speaking, the Apostle insinuates these *two* things. 1. That men are apt to lay their faults upon God ; for when he says, *Let no man say so*, he intimates, that men are apt to say so, and it is very probable that some *did* say so ; and 2dly, That it is not only a fault, but an impious assertion to say that God tempts men. He speaks of it as a thing to be rejected with a detestation. *Let no man say ;* that is, far be it from us to affirm a thing so impious and dishonourable to God.

Thirdly, the reason and argument that he brings against it, *for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.*

First, The proposition which the Apostle here rejects, and that is, *That God tempts men :* *Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God.* Now that we may the more distinctly understand the meaning of the proposition, which the Apostle here rejects, it will be very requisite to consider what *temptation* is, and the several sorts and kinds of it. To *tempt* a man, is, in general, nothing else but to make trial of him in any kind what he will do. In Scripture, temptation is commonly confin'd to the trial of a man's good or bad, of his virtuous or vicious inclinations. But then it is such a trial as endangers a man's virtue ; and if he be not well resolv'd, is likely to overcome it, and to

make

make him fall into sin. So that temptation does SERM.
always imply something of danger the worst way. LXI.

And men are thus tempted, either from themselves, or by others; by others chiefly these *two* ways.

First, By direct and downright persuasions to sin.

Secondly, By being brought into such circumstances as will greatly endanger their falling into it, tho' none sollicit and persuade them to it.

First, By direct and downright persuasions to sin. Thus the Devil tempted our first parents, by representing things so to them, as might on the one hand incite them to sin, and on the other hand weaken and loosen that which was the great curb and restraint from it. On the one hand he represents to them the advantages they should have by breaking God's command. *God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil.* On the other hand, he represents the danger of offending not to be so great and certain as they imagined. *The Serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die.* And the Devil had so good success in this way of tempting the first *Adam*, as to encourage him to set upon the second, our blessed Saviour, in the same manner; for he would have persuaded him *to fall down and worship him*, by offering him *all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them.* And thus bad men many times tempt others, and endeavour to draw them into the same wicked courses with themselves. *Solomon* represents to us the manner and the danger of it, *Prov. i. 10, 11, 13, 14. My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not; if they say, Come with us, let us lay wait for blood, let us work privily for the innocent without cause; we shall find all precious substance, we shall fill our houses with spoil. Cast in thy lot amongst us, let us all have one purse.* This is the first way of temptation.

And to be sure God tempts no man this way. He offers no arguments to man to persuade him to sin;
he

SERM. he no where proposeth either reward or impunity
 LXI. to sinners; but on the contrary gives all imaginable
 encouragement to obedience, and threatens the
 transgression of his law with most dreadful punishments.

Secondly, Men are likewise tempted, by being brought into such circumstances, as will greatly endanger their falling into sin, tho' none persuade them to it; and this happenst two ways; when men are remarkably beset with the allurements of the world, and assaulted with the evils and calamities of it; for either of these conditions are great temptations to men, and make powerful assaults upon them, especially when they fall upon those who are ill disposed before, or are but of a weak virtue and resolution.

The allurements of the world are strong temptations; riches, honours, and pleasures, are the occasions and incentives to many lusts. Honour and greatness, power and authority over others, especially when men are suddenly lifted up, and from a low condition, are apt to transport men to pride and insolency towards others. Power is a strong liquor which does easily intoxicate weak minds, and make them apt to say and do indecent things. *Man that is in honour and understands not, is like the beasts that perish*; intimating that men who are exalted to an high condition, are very apt to forget themselves, and to play the fools and beasts. It requires great consideration, and a well poised mind, not to be lifted up with one's condition. Weak heads are apt to turn and grow dizzy, when they look down from a great height.

And so likewise ease and prosperity are a very slippery condition to most men, and without great care to endanger the falling into great sins. So *Solomon* observes, *Prov. i. 32. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them.* For this reason *Agur* maketh his

his prayer to God, that he would give him neither *poverty nor riches*, but keep him in a mean condition, because of the danger of both extremes, *Pro. xxx. 8, 9. Give me not riches, lest I be full, and deny thee.* Both the eager desire and the possession and enjoyment of riches do frequently prove fatal to men. So our Saviour tells us elsewhere very emphatically, *Matth. xix. 23, 24. Verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven: And again I say unto you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.* St. Paul likewise very fully declares unto us the great danger of this condition, *1 Tim. vi. 9, 10. But they that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition; for the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*

But the greatest bait of all to flesh and blood, is sensual pleasures; the very presence and opportunity of these, are apt to kindle the desires, and to enflame the lusts of men, especially where these temptations meet with suitable tempers, where every spark that falls catcheth.

And on the other hand, the evils and calamities of this world, especially if they threaten or fall upon men in any degree of extremity, are strong temptations to human nature. Poverty and want, pain and suffering, and the fear of any great evil, especially of death, these are great straits to human nature, and apt to tempt men to great sins, to impatience and discontent, to unjust and dishonest shifts, to the forsaking of God, and apostasy from his truth and religion. Agur was sensible of the dangerous temptation of poverty, and therefore he prays against *that*, as well as against riches; *give me not poverty, lest being poor I steal, and take the name*

SERM. of the Lord my God in vain ; that is, lest I be tempted to theft, and perjury. The Devil, whose trade

LXI.

it is to tempt men to sin, knew very well the force of these sorts of temptations, when he desires God first to touch *Job* in his estate, and to see what effect that would have, *Job* i. 11. *But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.* And when he found himself deceived in this, surely he thought, that were he but afflicted with great bodily pains, that would put him out of all patience, and flesh and blood would not be able to withstand this temptation, *Chap.* ii. 5. *But put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face.* And this was the great temptation that the primitive Christians were assaulted withal ; they were tempted to forsake Christ and his religion, by a most violent persecution, by the spoiling of their goods, by imprisonment, and torture, and death. And this is that kind of temptation which the Apostle particularly speaks of before the text, *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation ; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him ;* and then it follows, *Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God.* And thus I have given an account of the several sorts of temptations comprehended under this second head, namely, when men are tempted by being brought into such circumstances as do greatly endanger their falling into sin, by the allurements of this world, and by the evils and calamities of it.

And the question is, how far God hath an hand in these kind of temptations, that so we may know how to limit this proposition, which the Apostle here rejects, *that men are tempted of God.* *Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God.*

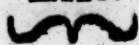
That the providence of God does order, or at least permit men to be brought into these circumstances I have spoken of, which are such dangerous temptations

temptations to sin, no man can doubt, that believes SERM.
his providence to be concern'd in the affairs of the LXI.

world. All the difficulty is, how far the Apostle does here intend to exempt God from an hand in these temptations. Now for the clearer understanding of this it will be requisite to consider the several ends and reasons, which those who tempt others may have in tempting them; and all temptation is for one of these *three* ends or reasons; either for the trial and improvement of mens virtues; or by way of judgment and punishment for some former great sins and provocations; or with a direct purpose and design to seduce men to sin; these I think are the chief ends and reasons that can be imagined, of exercising men with dangerous temptations.

First, For the exercise and improvement of mens graces and virtues. And this is the end which God always aims at, in bringing good men, or permitting them to be brought into dangerous temptations. And therefore St. *James* speaks of it as a matter of joy, when good men are exercised with afflictions; not because afflictions are desirable for themselves, but because of the happy consequences of them, *ver. 2. 3. of this Chapter, My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.* And to the same purpose St. *Paul*, Rom. v. 3, 4, 5. *We glory in tribulation, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience; δοκιμὴν* patience trieth a man, and this trial worketh hope, and hope maketh not ashamed. These are happy effects and consequences of affliction and suffering, when they improve the virtues of men and increase their graces, and thereby make way for the increase of their glory. Upon this account St. *James* pronounceth those *blest*, who are *thus* tempted. *Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is*

SERM. *tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the*
 LXI. *Lord hath promised to them that love him.*

 And this certainly is no disparagement to the providence of God, to permit men to be thus tempted, when he permits it for no other end, but to make them better men, and thereby to prepare them for a greater reward: And so the Apostle assures us, *Rom. viii. 17, 18. If so be we suffer with him, we shall also be glorified with him; for I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.* And *ver. 28. For we know that all things shall work together for good to them that love God.* And this happy end and issue of temptations to good men the providence of God secures to them (if they be not wanting to themselves) one of these two ways, either by proportioning the temptation to their strength; or if it exceed *that*, by ministering new strength and support to them, by the secret and extraordinary aids of his holy Spirit.

First, By proportioning the temptation to their strength; ordering things so by his secret and wise Providence, that they shall not be assaulted by any temptation, which is beyond their strength to resist and overcome. And herein the security of good men doth ordinarily consist; and the very best of us, those who have the firmest and most resolute virtue, were in infinite danger, if the providence of God did not take this care of us. For a temptation may set upon the best men with so much violence, or surprize them at such an advantage, as no ordinary degree of grace and virtue is able to withstand: But where men are sincerely good, and honestly resolv'd, the providence of God doth ward off these fierce blows, and put by these violent thrusts, and by a secret disposal of things, keep them from being assaulted by these irresistible kinds of temptations.

The

The consideration whereof, as it is a great en-
 couragement to men to be sincerely good, so like-
 wise a great argument for a continual dependance
 upon the providence of God, and to take us off from
 confidence in ourselves, and our own strength. And
 this use the Apostle makes of it, 1 Cor. x. 12. *Where-
 fore let him that thinketh he standeth*, (that is confident
 that nothing shall be able to shake him, or throw
 him down) *take heed lest he fall; there hath no tempta-
 tion taken you, but such as is common to men; εἰ μὴ ἀν-
 θρώπινος, but what is human; nothing but what an hu-
 man strength, assisted by an ordinary grace of God,
 may be able to resist and conquer. But there are
 greater and more violent temptations than these,
 which you have not yet been tried with; and when
 those happen, we must have recourse to God for an
 extraordinary assistance. And this is the*

Second way I mentioned, whereby the providence
 of God does secure good men in case of extraordi-
 nary temptations, which no human strength can pro-
 bably resist. And this the same Apostle assures us of
 in the very next words, *God is faithful, who will not
 suffer you to be tempted above what you are able, but will
 with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you
 may be able to bear it.* That is, in case of great and
 violent temptations (such as the Christians in the
 height of their persecutions were exposed to) God
 will secretly minister strength and support equal to
 the force and power of the temptation. And this
 God did in an extraordinary manner to the christian
 martyrs, and that to such a degree, as made them
 joyfully to embrace their sufferings, and with the
 greatest cheerfulness in the world to endure those tor-
 ments, which no human patience was able to bear.
 And where God doth thus secure men against temp-
 tations, or support them under them, it is no reflec-
 tion at all upon the goodness or justice of his provi-
 dence, to permit them to be thus tempted.

SERM.

LXI.

Secondly, God permits others to be thus tempted, by way of judgment and punishment for some former great sins and provocations which they have been guilty of. And thus many times God punisheth great and notorious offenders, by permitting them to fall into great temptations, which meeting with a vicious disposition, are likely to be too hard for them, especially considering how by a long habit of wickedness, and wilful commission of great and notorious sins, they have made themselves an easy prey to every temptation, and have driven the Spirit of God from them, and deprived themselves of those aids and restraints of his grace, which he ordinarily affords, not only to good men, but likewise to those who are not very bad. And thus God is said to have *harden'd Pharaoh* by those plagues and judgments which he sent upon him and his kingdom. But if we carefully read the story, it is said that *he first harden'd himself*, and then that *God harden'd him*; that is, he being harden'd under the first judgments of God, God sent more, which meeting with his obstinacy, had this natural effect upon him, to harden him yet more; not that God did infuse any wickedness or obstinacy into him, but by his just judgments sent more plagues upon him, which hardened him yet more, and which were likely to have that effect upon him, considering the ill temper of the man. And it was just by way of punishment that they should. And so likewise, *Joshua xi. 19, 20.* it is said that the cities of the *Canaanites* did not make peace with *Joshua*, because *it was of the Lord to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battel, that he might destroy them utterly*; that is, for their former iniquities, the measure whereof was now full, the providence of God did justly bring them into, and leave them under those circumstances, which made them obstinate against all terms of peace, and this proved fatal to them.

And

And in the like sense we are to understand several other expressions in scripture, which likewise might seem very harsh. As *Isaiah vi. 10. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and convert and be healed*; all which expressions signify no more, but that God, for the former provocations and impenitency of that people, did leave them to their own hardness and blindness, so that they did not desire to understand and make use of the means of their recovery. So likewise, *Rom. i. 24. God is said to have given up the idolatrous Heathen to uncleanness, to vile and unnatural lusts*; and ver. 28. *to a reprobate and injudicious mind*; that is, as a punishment of their idolatry, he left them to the power of those temptations, which betrayed them to the vilest lusts. And to mention but one text more, *2 Thess. ii. 11. the Apostle threatens those that rejected the truth, that for this cause God would send them strong delusions (the efficacy of error) that they should believe a lye, and that they all might be damned, who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness*; that is, as a just punishment for their renouncing the truth, God gave them over to the power of delusion; their error had its full scope at them, to tempt them with all its colours and pretences.

But it is observable, that, in all these places which I have mention'd, God is said to give men up to the power of temptation, as a punishment of some former great crimes and provocations. And it is not unjust with God thus to deal with men, to leave them to the power of temptation, when they had first wilfully forsaken him; and in this case God doth not tempt men to sin, but leaves them to themselves, to be tempted by their own hearts lusts; and if they yield and are conquered, it is their own fault, because they have neglected God's grace, whereby they might have been able to have resisted those temptations;

SERM. tions; and have forced his holy Spirit to withdraw
 LXI. himself from them, and to leave them open and
 naked to those assaults of temptation, against which
 they might otherwise have been sufficiently armed.

Thirdly, The last end of temptation which I mentioned, is to try men, with a direct purpose and intention to seduce men to sin. Thus wicked men tempt others, and thus the Devil tempts men. Thus he tempted our first parents, and seduced them from their obedience and allegiance to God. Thus he tempted *Job* by bringing him into those circumstances, which were very likely to have forc'd him into impatience and discontent. And thus he tempted our blessed Saviour; but *found nothing in him* to work upon, or to give him any advantage over him. And thus he daily tempts men, by laying all sorts of baits and snares before them, *going about continually seeking whom he may* seduce and destroy; and as far as God permits him, and his power reacheth, he suits his temptations as near as he can to the humours and appetites and inclinations of men, contriving them into such circumstances, as that he may ply his temptations upon them to the greatest advantage; propounding such objects to them, as may most probably draw forth the corruptions of men, and kindle their irregular desires, and inflame their lusts, and tempt their evil inclinations that way, which they are most strongly bent. He tempts the covetous man with gain, the ambitious man with preferment, the voluptuous man with carnal and sensual pleasures; and where none of these baits will take, he stirs up his instruments to persecute those who are stedfast and confirmed in resolutions of piety and virtue, to try if he can work upon their fear, and shake their constancy and fidelity to God and goodness that way; and all that he doth with a direct design and earnest desire to seduce men from their duty, and to betray them to sin.

But thus *God tempts no man*, and in this sense it is that the Apostle means that *no man when he is tempted*,
 ed,

ed, is tempted of God. God hath no design to se-
duce any man to sin. He often proves the obedience
of men, and suffers them to fall into divers tempta-
tions, for the trial of their faith, and exercise of their
obedience and other virtues; and he permits bad men
to be assaulted with great temptations, and as a pu-
nishment of their former obstinacy and impiety, with-
draws the aids and assistances of his grace from them,
and leaves them to their own weakness and folly;
but not so as to take away all restraint of his grace
even from bad men, unless it be upon very high pro-
vocation, and a long and obstinate continuance in sin;
But God never tempts any man, with any intention
to seduce him to sin, and with a desire he should do
wickedly. This is the proper work of the Devil
and his instruments; in this sense it is far from God
to tempt any man; and whenever in the ordinary
course, and by the common permission of his pro-
vidence, men fall into temptation, the utmost that
God does, is to leave them to themselves; and he does
not do this neither, but to those who have highly
provoked him to depart from them, that is, to those
who have justly deserved to be so dealt withal.

And thus I have consider'd the proposition which
the Apostle here rejects, namely, *that God tempts men*,
and have shewn as clearly as I can, how it is to be
limited and understood. I now proceed to the second
thing which I propounded to consider, viz. The
manner in which the Apostle rejects this proposition,
*Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of
God.* By which manner of speaking, he insinuates
two things.

First, That men are apt to lay their faults upon
God. For when he says, *Let no man say so*, he inti-
mates that men were apt to say thus; and 'tis proba-
ble some did say so, to excuse themselves for their
deserting their religion upon the temptation of per-
secution and suffering. 'Tis not unlikely that men
might lay the fault upon God's Providence, which
exposed

SERM.
LXI.

SERM. exposed them to these difficult trials, and thereby
LXI. tempted them to forsake their religion.

But however this be, we find it very natural to men, to transfer their faults upon others. Men are naturally sensible when they offend, and do contrary to their duty; and the guilt of sin is an heavy burthen, of which men would be glad to ease themselves as much as they can; and they think it is a mitigation and excuse of their faults if they did not proceed only from themselves, but from the violence and compulsion, the temptation and instigation of others. But especially men are very glad to lay their faults upon God, because he is a full and sufficient excuse, nothing being to be blamed that comes from him. Thus *Adam* did, upon the commission of the very first sin that mankind was guilty of. When God charged him for breaking of his law, by eating of the fruit of the forbidden tree, he endeavours to excuse himself by laying the fault obliquely upon God; *The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. The woman whom thou gavest to be with me;* he does what he can to derive the fault upon God. And tho' this be very unreasonable, yet it seems it is very natural. Men would fain have the pleasure of committing sin, but then they would be glad to remove as much of the trouble and guilt of it from themselves as they can.

Secondly, This manner of speech, which the Apostle here useth, doth insinuate further to us, that it is not only a false, but an impious assertion to say that God tempts men to sin. He speaks of it, not as a thing unfit to be said, but fit to be rejected with the greatest indignation; *let no man say*, that is, far be it from us to affirm any thing so impious and so dishonourable to God. For nothing can be more contrary to the holy and righteous nature of God, and to those plain declarations which he hath made of himself, than to seduce men to wickedness, and therefore no man, that hath any regard to the honour

nour of God, can entertain the least suspicion of his SERM.
 having any hand in the sins of men, or give heed to LXI.
 any principles or doctrines, from whence so odious and abominable a consequence may be drawn. I
 proceed to the

Third thing I propounded to consider, viz. The reason or argument which the Apostle brings against this impious suggestion; *That God cannot be tempted with evil*, and therefore no man can imagine that he should tempt any man to it; *Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.* And in speaking to this, I shall

First, Consider the strength and force of this argument; And

Secondly, The nature and kind of it.

First, The strength and force of this argument, *God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man*; ἀπειραστός ἐστὶ κακῶν; *he is untemptable by evil*; he cannot be drawn to any thing that is bad himself, and therefore it cannot be imagined he should have any inclination or design to seduce others. And this will appear to be a strong and forcible argument, if we consider,

First, The proposition upon which it is grounded, *that God cannot be tempted by evil.*

Secondly, The consequence that clearly follows from it; and that is, that because God cannot be tempted by evil, therefore *he cannot tempt any man to it.*

First, We will consider the proposition upon which this argument is built, and that is, *that God cannot be tempted by evil.* He is out of the reach of any temptation to evil. Whoever is tempted to any thing, is either tempted by his own inclination, or by the allurements of the object, or by some external motive and consideration: but none of all these can be imagined to have any place in God, to tempt him to evil.

For,

SERM.

LXI.

For, *First*, he hath no temptation to it from his own inclination. The holy and pure nature of God is at the greatest distance from evil, and at the greatest contrariety to it. He is so far from having any inclination to evil, that it is the only thing in the world to which he hath an irreconcilable antipathy. This the Scripture frequently declares to us, and that in a very emphatical manner, *Psal. v. 4. He is not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with him.* The words are a diminution, and less is said than is intended by them; the meaning is, that God is so far from taking pleasure in sin, that he hath a perfect hatred and abhorrence of it, *Hab. ii. 13. Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look upon iniquity.* As when men hate a thing to the highest degree, they turn away their eyes, and cannot endure to look upon it. Light and darkness are not more opposite to one another, than the holy nature of God is to sin. *What fellowship hath light with darkness, or God with Belial?*

Secondly, There is no allurement in the object, to stir up any inclination in him towards it. Sin in its very nature is imperfection, and irregularity, crookedness, and deformity; so that unless there be an inclination to it before-hand, there is nothing in it to move any one's liking or desire towards it; it hath no attractives or enticements in it, but to a corrupt and ill-disposed mind.

Thirdly, Neither are there external motives and considerations, that can be imagined to tempt God to it. All arguments that have any temptation, are either founded in hope or in fear; either in the hope of gaining some benefit or advantage, or in the fear of falling into some mischief or inconvenience. Now the divine nature being perfectly happy, and perfectly secured in its own happiness, is out of the reach of any of these temptations. Men are many times tempted to evil very strongly by these considerations;

rations; they want many things to make them happy, and they fear many things which may make them miserable; and the hopes of the one and the fears of the other, are apt to work very powerfully upon them, to seduce them from their duty, and to draw them to sin: but the divine Nature is firm against all these attempts, by its own fulness and security. So that you see now the proposition, upon which the Apostle grounds his argument, is evidently true, and beyond all exception, *that God cannot be tempted with evil.* Let us then in the

SERM.
LXI.

Second place, consider the consequence that clearly follows from it, That because God cannot be tempted with evil, *therefore he cannot tempt any man to it.* For why should he desire to draw men into that, which he himself abhors, and which is so contrary to his own nature and disposition? When men tempt one another to sin, they do it to make others like themselves; and when the Devil tempts men to sin, it is either out of direct malice to God, or out of envy to men. But none of these considerations can have any place in God, or be any motive to him to tempt men to sin.

Bad men tempt others to sin, to make them like themselves, and that with one of these *two* designs; either for the comfort or pleasure of company or for the countenance of it, that there may be some kind of apology and excuse for them.

For the comfort and pleasure of company. Man does not love to be alone; and for this reason bad men endeavour to make others like themselves, that agreeing with them in the same disposition and manners, they may be fit company for them. For no man takes pleasure in the society and conversation of those, who are of contrary tempers and inclinations to them, because they are continually warring and clashing with one another. And for this reason bad men hate and persecute those that are good. *Let us lie in wait* (say they) *for the righteous, because he is*

not

462 *The Sins of Men not chargeable upon God ;*

SERM. *not for our turn, and he is contrary to our doings; he is*
 LXI. *grievous unto us even to behold; for his life is not like*
 *other mens, and his ways are of another fashion; as it*
is exprefs'd in the wisdom of Solomon. So that
wicked men tempt others to sin, that they may
have the pleasure and contentment of their society.
But now for this reason God cannot be imagined to
tempt men to sin; because that would be the way to
make them unlike himself, and such as his soul
could take no pleasure in.

Another design that bad men have in seducing others to sin, is thereby to give countenance to their bad actions, and to be some kind of excuse and apology for them. Among men, the multitude of offenders does sometimes procure impunity, but it always gives countenance to vice; and men are apt to alledge it in their excuse, that they are not alone guilty of such a fault, that they did not do it without company and example; which is the reason of that law, *Exod. xxiii. 2. Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil*; implying, that men are very apt to take encouragement to any thing that is bad, from company and example. But neither hath this reason any place in God, who being far from doing evil himself, can have no reason to tempt others to do so, by way of excuse and vindication of himself.

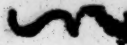
And when the Devil tempts men to sin, it is either out of direct malice to God, or out of envy to men. Out of malice to God, to spoil his workmanship, and to pervert that which came innocent and upright out of his hands; to rob God of his Subjects, and to debauch them from their duty and allegiance to him; to strengthen the rebellion which he has raised against God, and to make him as many enemies as he can. But for this end God cannot tempt any man; for this would be to procure dishonour to himself, and to deface the work of his own hands.

Another

Another reason why the Devil tempts men, is **SERM.**
 envy. When he was fallen from God, and happi- **LXI.**
 ness, and by his own rebellion made himself misera-
 ble, he was discontented to see the happy condition
 of man, and *it grieved him at his very heart*; and
 this moved him to tempt man to sin, that he might
 involve him in the same misery into which he had
 plunged himself. It is a pleasure to envy to over-
 turn the happiness of others, and to lay them level
 with themselves. But the Divine Nature is full of
 goodness, and delights in the happiness of all his
 creatures. His own incomparable felicity has pla-
 ced him as much above any temptation to envying
 others, as above any occasion of being condemned
 by them. He grudges no man's happiness, and
 therefore cannot tempt men to sin, out of a desire to
 see them miserable. So that none of those conside-
 rations which move the Devil to tempt men to sin,
 and evil men to tempt one another to do wickedly,
 can be imagined to have any place in God.

And thus you see the force of the Apostle's argu-
 ment, that because *God cannot be tempted to evil*,
 therefore *he can tempt no man*. None tempt others
 to be bad, but those who are first so themselves. I
 shall now in the

Second place, Consider the nature and kind of the
 argument, which the Apostle here useth, *Let no man*
say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for
God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he
any man. It does not reject this impious proposi-
 tion barely upon his own authority; but he argues
 against it from the nature and perfection of God;
 and therein appeals to the common notion of man-
 kind concerning God. We might very well have
 rested in his authority, being an Apostle commis-
 sioned by our Saviour, and extraordinarily assisted
 and witnessed to, by the miraculous gifts of the Ho-
 ly Ghost, wherewith he was endowed. But he con-
 descends to give a reason of what he says, and ap-
 peals

SERM. peals to the common principles of mankind. For
 LXI. all men will readily agree to this, *that God hath all*
 *imaginable perfection*: but it is a plain imperfection
 to be liable to be tempted to evil, and therefore *God*
cannot be tempted to evil. And if so, it is as impossible
that he should tempt others to it; for none can have
 either an inclination or interest to seduce others to
 evil, but those who have been first seduced to it them-
 selves.

Now in this method of arguing, the Apostle
 teaches us one of the surest ways of reasoning in reli-
 gion; namely, from *the natural notions which men*
have of God. So that all doctrines plainly contrary
 to those natural notions which men have of God,
 are to be rejected, what authority soever they pre-
 tend to; whatever plainly derogates from the good-
 ness or justice of God, or any other of his perfecti-
 ons, is certainly false, what authority soever it may
 claim from the judgment of learned and pious men;
 yea tho' it pretend to be countenanc'd from the texts
 and expressions of holy Scripture. Because nothing
 can be entertain'd as a divine revelation, which
 plainly contradicts the common natural notions
 which mankind have of God. For all reasoning a-
 bout divine Revelation, and whether that which
 pretends to be so, be really so or not, is to be govern-
 ed by those natural notions. And if any thing
 that pretends to be a revelation from God, should
 teach men that there is no God, or that he is not
 wise, and good, just, and powerful; this is reason
 enough to reject it, how confident soever the pre-
 tence be, that it is a divine Revelation.

And if any thing be, upon good grounds in rea-
 son, received for a divine revelation, (as the holy
 Scriptures are amongst Christians) no man ought to
 be regarded, who from thence pretends to maintain
 any doctrine contrary to the natural notions, which
 men have of God; such as clearly contradict his ho-
 linefs, or goodness, or justice, or do by plain and
 undeniable

undeniable consequence make God the author of SERM.
Sin, or the like; because the very attempt to prove LXI.
any such thing out of the Scripture, does strike at
the divine authority of those books. For if they
be from God, it is certain they can contain no such
thing. So that no man ought to suffer himself to
be seduced into any such opinions, upon pretence
that there are expressions in Scripture, which seem
to countenance them. For if they really did so,
the consequence would not be the confirming of
such opinions; but the weakening of the authori-
ty of the Scripture it self. For just so many argu-
ments as any man can draw from Scripture for any
such opinion, so many weapons he puts into the
hands of Atheists against the Scripture it self.

I do not speak this, as if I thought there were
any ground from Scripture for any such doctrine, I
am very certain there is not. And if there be any
particular expressions, which to prejudic'd men
may seem to import any such thing, every man
ought to govern himself in the interpretation of
such passages, by what is clear and plain, and a-
greeable to the main scope and tenor of the Bible,
and to those natural notions which men have of
God, and of his perfections. For when all is done,
this is one of the surest ways of reasoning in reli-
gion; and whoever guides himself, and steers by
this compass, can never err much: but whoever
suffers himself to be led away by the appearance of
some more obscure phrases in the expressions of
Scripture, and the glosses of men upon them, with-
out regard to this rule, may run into the greatest
delusions, may wander eternally, and lose himself
in one mistake after another, and shall never find
his way out of this endless *labyrinth*, but by *this clue*.

If St. *James* had not been an Apostle, the argu-
ment which he used would have convinced any rea-
sonable man, *that God tempts no man to sin*, because
he cannot be tempted with evil himself, and therefore

it is unreasonable to imagine *he should tempt any man*. For he argues from such a principle, as all mankind will, at first hearing, assent to.

And thus I have done with the *first* thing asserted by the Apostle here in the text; *That God tempts no man to sin*. Let no man say, when he is tempted, *I am tempted of God*; for God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth he any man. Before I proceed to the *second* assertion, *that every man is his own greatest tempter*, I should draw some useful inferences from what has been already delivered: but I reserve both the one and the other to the next opportunity.

*The Second
Sermon on
this Text.*

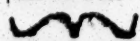
SERMON LXII.

The Sins of Men not chargeable upon God; but upon themselves.

+ JAMES i. 13, 14.

Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every Man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.

SERM.
LXII.



WHEN I made entrance upon these words, I told you, that next to the Belief of a God and a Providence, nothing is more fundamentally necessary to the practice of a good life, than the belief of these two principles; *that God is not the author of the sins of men*; and *that every man's fault lies at his own door*. And both these principles St. James does clearly and fully assert in these words.

First, God tempts no man to sin.

Secondly,

Secondly, Every man is his own greatest tempter. SERM.

The *first* of these I have largely spoken to in my **LXII.** former discourse; and from what I then said, I shall only draw a few useful inferences, before I proceed to the *second*, viz. These which follow.

First, Let us beware of all such doctrines, as do any ways tend to make God the author of sin; either by laying a necessity upon men of sinning, or by laying secret designs to tempt and seduce men to sin. Nothing can be farther from the nature of God, than to do any such thing, and nothing can be more dishonourable to him, than to imagine any such thing of him; *he is of purer eyes than to behold evil*; and can we think, that he who cannot endure to see it, should have any hand in it? We find that the holy men in Scripture are very careful to remove all thoughts and suspicion of this from God. *Elibu, Job xxxvi. 3.* before he would argue about God's providence with *Job*, he resolves in the first place, to attribute nothing to God, that is unworthy of him. *I will (say he) ascribe righteousness to my maker.* So likewise *St. Paul, Rom. vii. 7.* *What shall we say then? Is the law a sin? God forbid. Is the law a sin?* that is, hath God given men a law to this end, that he might draw them into sin? far be it from him. *Gal. ii. 17.* *Is Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.*

You see then how tender good men have always been of ascribing any thing to God, that might seem to render him the author of sin. So that we have reason to take heed of all doctrines that are of this tendency; such as are the doctrine of an absolute and irrelative decree to damn the greatest part of mankind; and in order to that, and as a means to it, efficaciously to permit them to sin. For if these things be true, that God hath absolutely decreed to damn the greatest part of men, and to make good this decree he permits them to sin, not by a bare permission of leaving them to themselves,

SERM. but by such a permission as shall be efficacious;

LXII. that is, he will so permit them to sin as they cannot avoid it; then those who are under this decree of God, are under a necessity of sinning; which necessity, since it does not proceed from themselves, but from the decree of God, does by consequence make God the author of sin. And then that the other doctrine, which is subservient to this, that God does by a physical and natural influence upon the minds and wills of men, determine them to every action that they do, to bad actions as well as good. I know they who say so, tell us that God only determines men to the action, but not to the evil of it. For instance, when *Cain* kill'd his brother, God determin'd him (they say) to the natural action of taking away a man's life, which in many cases may be done without sin. Very true: But if in these circumstances the natural action could not be done without committing the sin, he that determin'd him to the natural action, determin'd him likewise to the sin.

I am far from any thought that those that maintain these doctrines, had any intention to make God the author of sin: but if this be the necessary consequence of these doctrines, there is reason enough to reject them, how innocent soever the intention be of those who maintain them.

Secondly, Let not us tempt any man to sin. All piety pretends to be an imitation of God, therefore let us endeavour to be like him in this. 'Tis true indeed, we may be tempted with evil, and therefore we are likely enough to tempt others: but we ought not to do so. It is contrary to holiness and goodness, to the temper and disposition of the most perfect being in the world. God tempts no man; nay, it is the proper work and employment of the Devil, 'tis his very trade and profession; he goes about seeking whom he may betray into sin and destruction. To this end he walks up
and

and down the earth, waiting all opportunities and advantages upon men to draw them into sin; so that we are his factors and instruments, whenever we tempt men to sin. SERM. LXII.

Let those consider this, who are so active and busy to seduce men into any kind of wickedness, and to instruct them in the arts of iniquity, who tempt men into bad company and courses, and take pleasure in debauching a virtuous person, and make it matter of great triumph to make a sober man drunk, as if it were so glorious an action to ruin a soul, and destroy that, which is more worth than the whole world. Whenever you go about this work, remember whose instruments you are, and whose work you do, and what kind of work it is. Tempting others to sin is in scripture called murder, for which reason the Devil is said to be a murderer from the beginning, because he was a tempter. *Whosoever committeth sin is of the Devil: but whosoever tempts others to sin, is a sort of Devil himself.*

Thirdly, Since God tempts no man, let us not tempt him. There is frequent mention in Scripture of mens tempting God, *i. e.* trying him as it were whether he will do any thing for their sakes, that is misbecoming his goodness and wisdom, and faithfulness, or any other of his perfections. Thus the *Israelites* are said to have tempted God in the wilderness forty years together, and in that space, more remarkably ten times. The meaning of which expressions is, that when God had promised *Abraham* to bring his seed into the land of *Canaan*, that people by their great and repeated provocations of God, did often provoke him to have destroyed them, and consequently to have fail'd of the promise which he made to the fathers. The Devil likewise tempted our Saviour to tempt God, by casting himself down from the pinnacle of the temple, in confidence that the Angels would take care of him: but our Savi-

SERM. our answers him, *It is written, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.* From which instance it appears,

What men are said to tempt God, whenever they expect the protection of his providence in an unwarrantable way. God hath promised to take care of good men, but if they neglect themselves, or willingly cast themselves into danger, and expect his providence and protection, they do not trust God, but tempt him; they try whether God's providence will countenance their rashness, and provide for them, when they neglect themselves; and protect them from those dangers, to which they wilfully expose themselves.

So likewise if we be negligent in our callings, whereby we should provide for our families, if we lavish away that which we should lay up for them, and then depend upon the providence of God to supply them, and take care of them, we tempt God to that which is unworthy of him; which is to give approbation to our folly, and to countenance our sloth and carelessness. We cannot seduce God, and draw him to do any thing that misbecomes him, but we tempt him in expecting the care and protection of his providence, when we wilfully run ourselves into danger, and neglect the means of providing for our own safety. And thus I have done with the *first* great principle contain'd in the text; *viz. That God is not the author of the sins of men.* I proceed now to the

Second, That every man is his own greatest tempter. But every man is tempted, when he is drawn aside of his own lust, and enticed. God does not tempt any man to sin: but every man is then tempted, when by his own lust, his irregular inclination and desire, he is seduced to evil, and enticed; *καὶ δαλαζόμενος*, is caught as it were with a bait, for so the Greek word signifies.

In which words the Apostle gives us a true account of the prevalency and efficacy of temptati-
on

on upon men. It is not because God has any de-
 sign to ensnare men in sin; but their own corrup-
 tion and vicious inclinations seduce them to that
 which is evil. To instance in the particular tempt-
 ations the Apostle was speaking of persecution and
 suffering for the *cause of religion*, to avoid which,
 many did then forsake the truth, and apostatiz'd
 from their Christian profession. The true cause of
 which, was not the providence of God, which
 permitted them to be expos'd to those sufferings;
 but their inordinate love of the good things of this
 life, and their unreasonable fears of the evils and
 sufferings of it; they valued the enjoyments of this
 present life, more than the favour of God, and that
 eternal happiness which he had promised to them in
 another life; and they feared the persecutions
 of men more than the threatnings of God, and the
 dreadful punishments of another world. They had
 an inordinate affection for the ease and pleasure of
 this life, and their unwillingness to part with these,
 was a great temptation to them to quit their religi-
 on; by this bait they were caught, when it came
 to the trial.

And thus it is proportionably in all other sorts of
 temptations. Men are betrayed by themselves, and
 the temptation without hath a party within them,
 with which it holds a secret correspondence, and
 which is ready to yield and give consent to it; so
 that it is our own consent, and treachery to our
 selves, that makes any temptation master of us,
 and without that we are not to be overcome; *every
 man is tempted, when he is drawn aside of his own
 lust, and enticed.* It is the lust of men complying
 with the temptations which are offer'd to us, which
 renders them effectual, and gives them the victory
 over us.

In the handling of this argument, I shall from
 these words of the Apostle observe to you these *two*
 things.

SERM.

LXII. *First*, That as the Apostle doth here acquit God from any hand in tempting men to sin, so he does not ascribe the prevalency of temptation to the Devil.

Secondly, That he ascribes the prevalency of temptation to the lust and vicious inclinations of men, which seduce them to a compliance with the temptations that are presented to them; *every man is tempted, when he is drawn aside of his own lust, and enticed.* These two observations shall be the subject of my present discourse.

First, That as the Apostle doth here acquit God from any hand in tempting men to sin, so he does not ascribe the prevalency and efficacy of temptation to the Devil. That he acquits God, I have shewn at large in my former discourse. It is evident likewise, that he does not ascribe the efficacy and prevalency of temptation to the Devil; for the Apostle in this discourse of his concerning temptations makes no express mention of the Devil; he supposeth indeed, that baits are laid for men, *every man is tempted, when he is drawn aside of his own lust, and enticed, i. e.* when he plays with the baits that are laid for him, and swallows them. And the Scripture elsewhere frequently tells us, that the Devil is very active and busy to tempt men, and is continually laying baits before them; but their own lusts are the cause why they are caught by them.

And I do the rather insist upon this, because men are apt to lay great load upon the Devil, in the business of temptation, hoping thereby either wholly, or at least in a great measure to excuse themselves; and therefore I shall here consider how far the Devil by his temptations is the cause of the sins which men by compliance with those temptations are drawn into.

First, It is certain that the Devil is very active and busy to minister to them the occasion of sin,
and

and temptations to it. For ever since he fell from **SERM.**
God, partly out of enmity to him, and partly out **LXII.**
of envy and malice to mankind, he hath made it 
his great business and employment to seduce men to
sin; and to this end he walks up and down the earth,
and watcheth all occasions and opportunities to
tempt men to sin; and so far as his power reacheth,
and God permits him, he lays baits and temptations
before them in all their ways, presenting them
with the occasions and opportunities to sin, and
with such baits and allurements as are most suitable
to their tempers, and most likely to prevail with
their particular inclinations, and as often as he can,
surprizing men with these at the easiest time of ac-
cess, and with such circumstances, as may give his
temptations the greatest force and advantage. Of
this the Scripture assures us in general, when it
tells us of those wiles and devices of Satan, and of
the methods of his temptations; so that tho' we
do not particularly discern how and when he doth
this, yet we have no reason to doubt of the thing,
if we believe that there is such a spirit in the world,
as the Scripture particularly tells us there is, that
works in the children of disobedience; and that
God from whom nothing is hid, and who sees all the
secret engines which are at work in the world, to
do us good or harm, hath in mercy to mankind gi-
ven us particular warning of it, and that we may
not be wholly ignorant of our enemies, and their
malicious designs upon us, that we may be conti-
nually upon our guard, aware of our danger, and
armed against it.

Secondly, The Devil does not only present to men
the temptations and occasions of sin; but when he
he is permitted to make nearer approaches to them,
does excite and stir them up to comply with these
temptations, and to yield to them. And this he does,
not only by employing his instruments, to solicit
for him, and to draw men to sin by bad counsel and
example,

SERM. example, which we see frequently done, and probably very often by the Devil's instigation; (those
 LXII. who are very wicked themselves, and consequently more enslaved to the Devil, and under his power, being as it were factors for him to seduce others;) besides this, 'tis not improbable but the Devil himself does many times immediately excite men to sin, by working upon the humours of their bodies, or upon their imaginations; and by that means infusing and suggesting evil motions into them; or by diverting them from those thoughts and considerations, which might check and restrain them from that wickedness to which he is tempting them; or by some other ways and means more secret and unknown to us. For the power of the Spirits, whether good or bad, and the manner of their operations upon our minds, are things very secret, and of which we can give little or no account, but yet for all that, we have many times reason sufficient to believe a thing to be so, when we are wholly ignorant of the manner of it.

And there is reason, from what is said in Scripture, to believe that the Devil, in some cases, hath a more immediate power and influence upon the minds of men, to excite them to sin, and, where he discovers a very bad inclination or resolution, to help it forward, and to keep men to it; as when it is said, *John xiii. 27.* that *the Devil entered into Judas*, to push him on in that ill design which he had already engaged in, of betraying our Saviour. And *Acts v. 3.* Satan is said to have *filled the heart of Ananias*, to lie to the holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price for which he had sold his estate; which expressions do seem to intimate to us some more immediate power and influence which the Devil had upon those persons: but then 'tis very observable, that this power is never ascribed to the Devil, but in case of great and horrid sins, and where men are before hand notoriously depraved,
 and

and either by the actual commission of some former SERM.
great sin, or by entertaining some very wicked de- LXII.
sign, have provoked God to permit the Devil a
nearer access to them. For *Judas* had first taken
council how to betray Christ, before it is said *the*
Devil enter'd into him, to push him on to the execu-
tion of it. And *Ananias* his covetousness had first
tempted him to keep back part of his estate, before
it is said *the Devil filled his heart to lie to the Holy*
Ghost; so that what power the Devil hath over
men, they first give it him; they consent to his
outward temptations, before he can get within
them. Hence it is that in Scripture great sinners
are described, as being more immediately under the
government and influence of the Devil. *Ephes. ii.*
1, 2. Where the Apostle speaking of those, who
from heathenism were converted to Christianity,
You (says he) hath he quicken'd, who were once dead in
trespasses and sins; wherein in times past ye walked,
according to the course of this world, according to the
prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now
worketh in the children of disobedience, or unbelief;
τοῦ πνεύματος τοῦ νῦν ἐνεργούντος, the spirit that still acts and
inspires the children of unbelief; that is, those who
continue in their infidelity, and would not believe
and obey the gospel. When men are notoriously
wicked and disobedient to the councils of God, the
Devil is said to act and inspire them, which certain-
ly signifies some more immediate power and influ-
ence which he hath over such persons.

Foras it is very probable, that the Devil is some-
times permitted to come near good men so as to
tempt them; so by notorious wickedness and im-
piety, men do give admission to him, and he is per-
mitted by the just judgment of God to exercise
greater dominion over them. By resisting his
temptations, we drive him from us. So *St. James*
tells us, *Chap. iv. 7. Resist the Devil, and he will*
flee from you: but as we yield to his temptations,
he

SERM. he continually makes nearer approaches to us, and
 LXII. gains a greater power over us.

Thirdly, But for all this, the Devil can force no man to sin; his temptations may move and excite men to sin, but that they are prevalent and effectual, proceeds from our own will and consent; 'tis our *own lusts* closing with his temptations, that produce sin. The Devil hath more or less power over men, according as they give way to him; but never so much as to force their wills, and to compel them to consent to, and comply with his temptations; the grace of God doth hardly offer this violence to men for their good, in order to their salvation; and therefore much less will he permit the Devil to have this power over men to their ruin and destruction. God's commanding us to resist the Devil, supposeth that his temptations are not irresistible.

Fourthly, From what hath been said, it appears, that tho' the Devil be frequently accessory to the sins of men, yet we ourselves are the authors of them; he tempts us many times to sin, but it is we that commit it. His temptations may sometimes be so violent as to extenuate our fault, but never so forcible as wholly to excuse us; for we are so far guilty of sin, as we give our consent to it; and how powerful soever the temptation be to any kind of evil, there is always enough of our own will in it to render us guilty.

I am far from thinking that the Devil tempts men to all the evil that they do. I rather think that the greatest part of the wickedness that is committed in the world, springs from the evil motions of mens own minds. Mens own lusts are generally to them the worst Devil of the two, and do more strongly incline them to sin, than any Devil without them can tempt them to it. It is not to be doubted, that the Devil does all the mischief he can to the souls of men, so far as God permits him; and tho' the number of evil Angels be probably very great, yet it is
 but

but finite, and every one of them hath a limited **SERM.**
power; and tho' they be very active, yet they can **LXII.**
be but one where at once; so that his malice at the
utmost does only all the evil that it can, not all that
it would; he plyes where he has the best custom,
where he has the fairest opportunity, and the greatest
hopes; he leaves men many times for a season as (it
is said) he did our Saviour, because he despairs of
success at that time; and it may be sometimes when
he is gone, these persons grow secure, and through
their own security and folly fall into those sins, which
the Devil with all his baits and wiles, whilst they
were upon their guard, could not tempt them to
commit.

Others, after he has made them sure, and put
them into the way of it, will go on of themselves,
and are as mad of sinning, as forward to destroy
themselves, as the Devil himself could wish; so that
he can hardly tempt men to any wickedness, which
he does not find them inclin'd to of themselves.
These he can trust with themselves, and leave them
to their own inclinations and conduct, finding by
experience, that they will do as ill things of their
own motion, as if Satan stood continually at their
right hand to prompt them, and put them on, so
that he can go into a far country, and employ him-
self elsewhere, and leave them for a long time, be-
ing confident that in his absence they will not bury
their talent, and hide it in a napkin, but will im-
prove it to a great advantage. And I wish that our
own age did not afford us too many instances of this
kind, of such forward and expert sinners, as need
no tempter either to instruct or excite them to that
which is evil. Now in this case the Devil betakes
himself to other persons, and removes his snares and
baits where he thinks there is more need and oc-
casion for them.

So that we may reasonably conclude, that there is
a great deal of wickedness committed in the world,
which

SERM. which the Devil hath no immediate hand in, tho'

LXII. he always rejoiceth in it when it is done; and that

there is a great deal more reason to attribute all good to the motions and operations of the Spirit of God, than to ascribe all sin and wickedness in the world to the Devil; because the spirit of God is more powerful, and is always every where, and is more intent upon his design, and as forward to promote it, as the Devil can be to carry on his work; nay, I doubt not but he is more active to excite men to good, than the Devil can be to tempt them to evil. And yet for all this I think there is no great reason to doubt but that good men do many good actions of their own inclination, without any special and immediate motion from the Spirit of God. They are indeed at first regenerate, and sanctified by the holy Ghost, and are continually afterwards under the conduct of the same Spirit: but where there is a new nature, it is of itself inclinable to that which is good, and will bring forth fruits, and do actions answerable. Much less do I think that the Devil tempts every man to all the evil that he does, or the greatest part. When the lusts of men, and the habits of vice are grown strong and confirmed, the Devil may spare his temptations in a great measure; for after wicked men are wound up to such a pitch of impiety, they will go a great while of themselves.

I have done with the *first* observation, that as the Apostle acquits God from having any hand in tempting men to sin, so neither does he ascribe the efficacy and prevalency of temptation to the Devil. I proceed to the

Second observation, That he ascribes the efficacy and success of temptation to the lusts and vitious inclinations of men, which seduce them to a consent and compliance with the temptations which are afforded to them. *Every man is tempted, when he is drawn aside of his own lust, and enticed.* We have many powerful enemies; but we are much more in danger of treachery from within, than of assaults from

from without. All the power of our enemies could **SERM.**
not destroy us if we were but true to our selves; so **LXII.**
that the Apostle had great reason to ascribe the effi-
cacy of temptation, to the irregular desires and vi-
tious inclinations of men, rather than to those tempt-
ations which the providence of God permits them
to be assaulted with, and consequently to lay the
blame of men's Sins chiefly upon themselves.

And that chiefly upon these *two* accounts.

First, Because the lusts of men are in a great mea-
sure voluntary.

Secondly, God hath put it in our power to resist
those temptations, and overcome them. Now so far
as the lusts of men are voluntary, it is their own fault
that they are seduced by them; and if God hath put
it in our power to resist and overcome temptations,
we may blame our selves, if we be overcome and
foiled by them.

First, The lusts of men are in a great measure vo-
luntary. By the lusts of men, I mean their irregu-
lar desires, and vicious inclinations. I grant that
the nature of man is very much corrupted, and de-
generated from it's primitive integrity and perfecti-
on: but we who are Christians, have received that
grace in baptism, whereby our natures are so far hea-
led, as if we be not wanting to our selves, and do
not neglect the means which God hath appointed to
us, we may mortify our lusts, and live a new life;
so that if our lusts remain unmortified, we our selves
are in fault, much more if they gain new strength,
and proceed to habits; for this could not be, if we
did not after we come to age, and are able to discern
between, and to chuse good and evil, voluntary con-
sent to iniquity, and by wilful and deliberate prac-
tice of known sins, improve the evil inclinations of
our nature into vicious habits: but if instead of mor-
tifying and subduing the evil propensions of our na-
ture (which is no very difficult work to most per-
sons, if they begin it betimes) we will cherish and
give new life and power to them, we forfeit the
grace

SERM. grace which we received in Baptism, and bring our
 LXII. selves again under the power and dominion of sin ;
 ~~~~~ and no wonder then, if our lusts seduce us, and make  
 us ready to comply with the temptations of the world  
 and the Devil.

Nay, and after this it is still our own fault, if we do not mortify our lusts ; for if we would hearken to the counsel of God, and obey his calls to repentance, and sincerely beg his grace and holy Spirit to this purpose, we might yet recover our selves, and *by the spirit mortify the lusts of the flesh* for tho' we have left God, he hath not quite forsaken us, but is ready to afford his grace again to us, tho' we have neglected and abused it, and to give his holy Spirit to those that ask him, tho' we have forfeited it ; so that tho' our lusts spring from something which is natural, yet that they live and have dominion over us, is voluntary, because we might remedy it if we would, and make use of those means which God in the Gospel offers to us.

*Secondly*, God hath put it in our power to resist these temptations ; and overcome them ; so that it is our own fault, if we yield to them, and be overcome by them.

It is naturally in our power to resist many sorts of temptations ; and the grace of God, if we do not neglect it, and be not wanting to our selves, puts it in our power to resist any temptation that may happen to us.

*First*, It is naturally in our power to resist many sorts of temptations. If we do but make use of our natural reason, and those considerations which are common and obvious to men, we may easily resist the temptations to a great many sins. Some sins are so horrid in their nature, that when we have the strongest temptations to them, we cannot but have a natural aversion from them ; as deliberate murder, the danger and guilt whereof, are both so great, as make it easy for any considerate man to resist the strongest temptation to it, even that of revenge. A plain act of injustice, whether by great fraud, or by down-  
 right

right oppression, is so base and disgraceful, so odious and abhorred by human nature, that it is not difficult to a man that hath but a common understanding, and common inclination to be honest, to overcome the greatest temptation of gain and advantage; nay he must offer considerable violence to his nature and reason, to bring himself to it at first. Prophaneness and contempt of God and religion is so monstrous a fault, and of so dreadful an appearance, that every man that will but use his reason, can have no temptation to it, either from gratifying his humour, or pleasing his company, or shewing his wit, that can be of equal force with the arguments which every man's mind and conscience is apt to suggest to him against it.

Nay, there are many sins much inferior to these, the temptations whereto may by the ordinary reasons and considerations of prudence and interest, be baffled and put out of countenance. To instance in common swearing, to which I think there is no temptation, either from pleasure or advantage, but only from fashion and custom. Now this temptation is easy to be conquer'd, by considering that every man that professeth to believe the Bible, must acknowledge it to be a sin; and if any man be convinc'd that it is a sin, I dare undertake to convince him that he can leave it. He that can chuse at any time whether he will speak or not (which it is certainly in every man's power to do) can chuse whether he will swear when he speak. If he says he does it by custom and habit, and when he does not think of it; a very little care and resolution will in a short time cure any man of that custom; so that it is naturally in every man's power, to break off this sin.

*Secondly,* The grace of God puts it into our power, if we do not neglect it, and be not wanting to ourselves, to resist any temptation that may happen to us; and what the grace of God puts into our power,

SERM. is as truly in our power, as what we can do our selves.

LXII. God offers his grace to every man under the gospel,  
 W for he has promised *to give his holy Spirit to them that ask him*; and it is naturally in every man's power to ask it, otherwise the promise signifies nothing; for if no man can ask the Spirit of God, till he first have it, then to promise it to them that ask it, is to promise it to them who have it already, and then 'tis needless to ask it. And if God offers his grace to every man, then 'tis every man's fault if he have it not; and every man that hath it, may by the ordinary assistance of that grace, resist any ordinary temptation. And if at any time God suffers good men to be assaulted, he hath promised in such cases an extraordinary grace and assistance: and that either *he will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able, or that with the temptation he will find a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it.*

And thus I have done with the *second* thing I propounded to speak to from these words, *that every man is his own greatest tempter. Every man is tempted, when he is drawn aside of his own lust and enticed.* And now the proper inferences from what I have been all this while discoursing to you are these *three.*

*First,* Not to think to excuse ourselves, by laying the blame of our sins upon the temptation of the Devil. That the Devil tempts us is not our fault, because we cannot help it; but it is our voluntary compliance with his temptations, our consenting to that evil which he sollicitates us to, which maketh us guilty. *Every man is tempted when he is drawn aside of his own lust:* The lusts of our own hearts give the efficacy to the temptations of the Devil: men many times sin upon the motions and suggestions of the Devil: but tho' he be guilty of tempting us, we are guilty of consenting to his temptations.

Many times we are not sure that the Devil tempts us to such a sin, but we are sure that we commit it, and consequently that we are guilty of it. Nay it is certain,



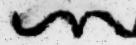
certain, if there were no Devil, many would be wicked, and perhaps not much less wicked than they are. The lusts and vicious inclinations of men would yield to the temptations of the world, tho' there were none to manage them, and to set them on to the greatest advantage; so that we cannot excuse our faults upon this account, that we are tempted by the Devil. If this were a sufficient excuse for us, the Devil would take no pleasure in tempting us; the whole design of his temptation being to make us guilty, and by the guilt of sin to make us miserable.

*Secondly,* From hence we learn what reason we have to pray to God, that he would *not lead us into temptation, i. e.* not permit us to fall into it; for in the phrase of Scripture, God is many times said to do those things, which his providence permits to be done. The best of us have some remainders of lust, some irregular desires and appetites, which will be apt to betray us to sin, when powerful temptations are presented to us; so that it is a great happiness to the best of men, to be kept by the providence of God out of the way of violent temptations; for our own strength to resist them is but small, and we are apt to be secure, and to neglect our guard; we are easy to be surprized, and in continual danger through our own weakness or carelessness. Our greatest security is, if we be sincere, and heartily desires to do well, and firmly resolved against sin, and do depend upon God for his grace and assistance, that his providence will not suffer us to fall into the hands of dangerous and violent temptations, which probably would be too hard for us; he who knows what our strength is, *will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able.*

*Thirdly,* From hence we may learn the best way to disarm temptations, and to take away the power of them, and that is by mortifying our lusts, and subduing our vitious inclinations. When this is done,

SERM. done, (which by the grace of God may be done)

LXII. temptation hath lost its greatest advantage upon us.

 'Tis the conspiracy of our lusts, with the temptations that set upon us, that betrays us into their power. The true reason why men fall into sin, is not because they are tempted, but because there is something within them, which inclines and disposes them to comply with the temptation, and to yield to it. It is said, when the Devil came to our Saviour to tempt him, that *he found nothing in him*, and therefore his temptations had no force upon him. The more we mortify our lusts, the less the Devil will find in us, for his temptations to work upon. Every spark is dangerous, when it falls upon combustible matter; but tho' sparks fly never so thick, there is no danger, so long as there is nothing about us to catch fire.

If we will not be drawn aside and enticed to sin, let us mortify our lusts; for so far as we are mortified, we are out of the power of temptation.

Men are apt to complain of temptations, that they are too hard for them, and that they are not able to resist them, tho' they pray to God continually for his grace to that purpose. This indeed is one means very proper and necessary to be used; but this is not all that we are to do; we must break off habits of sin, and subdue our lusts, and keep under our inclinations, and then we shall find our selves able to resist and encounter temptations with more success. And till we do this, in vain do we pray for God's grace, and depend upon him for strength to overcome the temptations that do assault us; for God's grace was never design'd to countenance the sloth and negligence of men, but to encourage and second our resolutions and endeavours of well-doing. If we expect God's Grace and assistance upon other terms, we tempt God, and provoke him to leave us to the power of temptations, to be *drawn away and enticed by our own lusts.* 1 AP 57

*The End of the fifth Volume.*